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MAKING MARIONETTES

Making Marionettes

BY C. EDMUND ROSSBACH



HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY NEW YORK

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INTRODUCTION

A DECADE ago, puppets and marionettes belonged to a rare art about which little was known in the United States. Recently, however, there has been a phenomenal growth of interest in this form of entertainment. Not only are scores of scattered amateur and professional groups creating this nation-wide awakening, but also students, fascinated by education projects in puppetry, are making families of all classes puppet-conscious.

With interest in an art comes a desire to participate in that art. So it is that when visitors, young and old, crowd backstage after a performance, the inevitable question is asked, "How do you learn to make puppets?" The inquirer's inability to do satisfactory work unguided, and his consequent confusion, necessarily result in his prompt loss of interest and desire to participate in this most fascinating occupation. After one has constructed and operated a few marionettes, he will receive boundless pleasure from attempting new and clever features, but unless he is of the rather experimental turn of mind, he will never surmount, unguided, the first marionette.

It is my hope that through these drawings and explanations, the more mature novice may sustain his interest and enjoy puppetry, and that those already acquainted with marionettes may perhaps receive new suggestions and aids.

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MAKING MARIONETTES

Chapter One

LET'S BEGIN

ARE YOUR fingers anxious to begin making a puppet? It is safe to conjecture that they are—that is, if you have recently returned from a gay marionette performance.

Then it would be most imprudent to suggest that you first realize how the art of puppetry was practiced in ancient Egypt and India; how the puppet has lived and thrived among peoples everywhere; and how this unique form of entertainment has delighted the illiterate masses, as well as the cultured few, for centuries. Such history is thrilling and perhaps surprising to a generation belonging to “puppet-starved America,” as it was called a few years ago. Yet a lengthy tracing of the puppet’s amazing existence, and an enumeration of the values and benefits of puppetry would seem tedious to one eager to feel a tool in his hand and to know that he is making a tangible step toward a puppet of his own.

So sharpen your jack-knife and hunt up some wire and nails and scraps, for the puppets through the ages can wait until you have added another member or two to their happy troupe.

SALES TALK

But you must know exactly which type of puppet you wish to create. For there are numerous kinds, each differing in abil-

MAKING MARIONETTES

ity, appeal, and method of construction. There are the simple cardboard figures, whose jointed arms and legs are moved by thin sticks or stiff wires manipulated from below; the *buratini* puppets, fitting over the hands much as mittens do; and the marionettes, which suspend by strings from controllers held in the hands of the operator.

Let's only consider the marionette, for this puppet is the most flexible of all. Through clever manipulation of the strings he walks and dances and, in fact, mimics human actions with such delightful reality that he seems almost endowed with life. (Therein lies one of the chief appeals and responsibilities of puppetry, for each of these miniature people is utterly dependent and submissive. He must do exactly as ordered—his very existence depends upon his maker and operator.) Besides being capable performers, marionettes are the most practical type of puppet for audiences of varying sizes. Even small marionettes, against a contrasting background, can be seen at a considerable distance. Furthermore, since marionettes can be small and yet effective, they are not expensive to make or clumsy—comparatively speaking—to transport and manipulate.

AND COUNSEL

Having decided to build a marionette, it is very unwise to rush into the actual construction. To purchase a length of fine, soft wood and to start carving an arm or leg, although you may have a definite idea of how that arm or leg is shaped, may prove fatal to your marionette career or hobby. For a puppet built in an impetuous, unplanned manner will result in a distorted doll, grotesque enough to extinguish even an ardent faith

LET'S BEGIN

in your ability to make well-proportioned, well-performing figures.

The appeal of the puppet lies in his so suggesting and simulating a living being that the observer soon forgets he is watching a jointed doll, and feels that a performer endowed with life is before him. But this illusion can never be achieved while the puppets are sufficiently ill-proportioned to impress constantly upon the audience that the actors are simply misformed dolls. Not only must the marionettes themselves be well-proportioned, but also all the characters, properties, and scenery must be of relative size, and there must be an exacting attentiveness to scale throughout the entire play or performance.

The scale upon which the entire performance is to be based must be determined at the very beginning. This scale is denominated by the height of an average puppet. "Eighteen-inch puppets" means that the average male figure is eighteen inches tall. If a six-foot man is to be reproduced as an eighteen-inch puppet, the scale is "three inches to a foot." Following this scale of "eighteen-inch puppets," a woman five feet tall will be reproduced as a puppet fifteen inches high; a stool eighteen inches tall will be built four and one-half inches high. This idea of building to scale may at first seem tedious, but nevertheless it is one of the most important aids toward achieving a finished performance that will produce the desired illusion.

So you must decide how tall your puppets are to be—on what scale you are going to build. In reaching a decision, the following points should be thoroughly considered: how large will the average audience be (will it be necessary for the puppets to be seen from the rear of a large hall?); will facilities in halls or

MAKING MARIONETTES

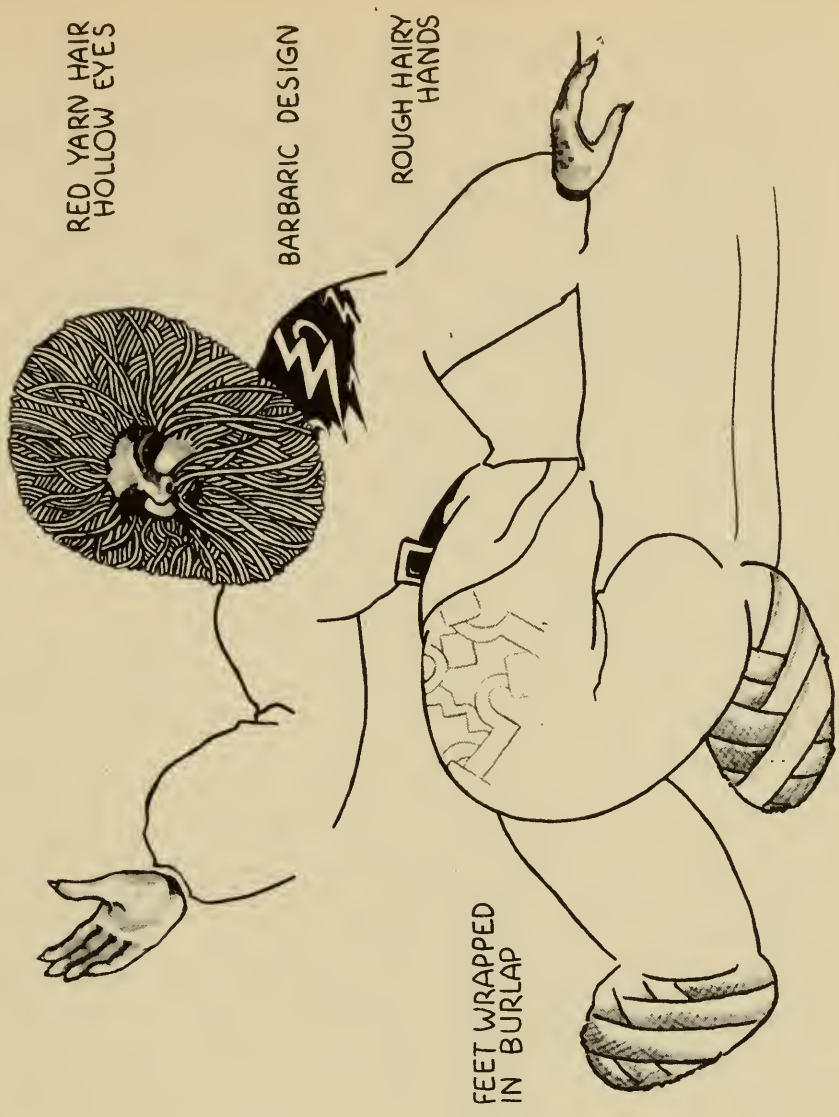
auditoriums permit the large stage required by large marionettes; will there constantly be the problem of transporting the marionettes after they are completed (even a small puppet of any kind is awkward to move in good condition); must you build and costume the puppets principally with small scraps of left-over wood, wire, and cloth, or are you prepared to purchase sufficient material to create larger figures; in what type of productions will the marionettes perform—dainty fantasies or broad burlesques? An intelligent consideration of these factors should facilitate deciding upon the correct scale to meet your own requisites and limitations.

SCRIBBLES AND PLANS

Arrive at a "scale," and you are ready to make a rough sketch of the character you have in mind—for it is probable that already in your imagination is the marionette you would like to construct. This first sketch is not to be a working drawing, laboriously planned to show minute detail, as, for instance, how the joints will operate and how great will be the distance between shoulder and elbow. Instead it is simply to be a tangible drawing of the effect you wish your puppet to create. Crayon is an excellent medium when used in a bold manner on drawing or lay-out paper. The figure may not be in an erect, fashion-plate position, but will be in a freely-drawn, characteristic pose. The main lines of the costume will be expressed, but details, even as to color, will be ignored. The margin of the drawing may be filled with pertinent suggestions, jotted down before forgotten. In other words, this



RELATIVE SIZE
OF FIGURES



THE PRELIMINARY SKETCH
PLATE I

MAKING MARIONETTES

drawing is rather an impractical, idealized suggestion of how you wish your puppet to appear.

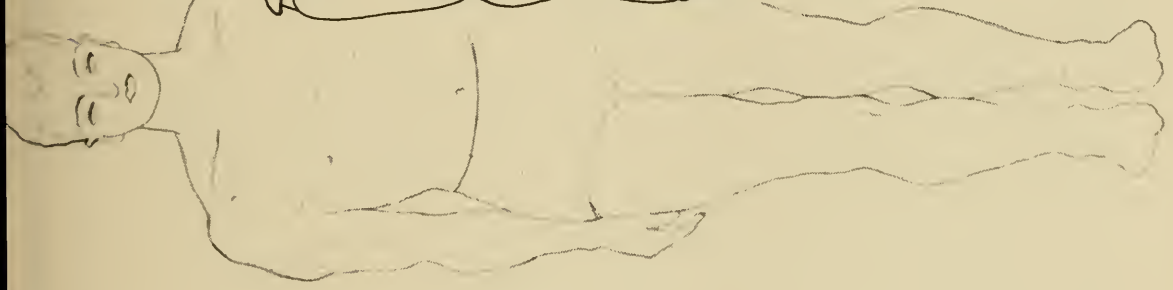
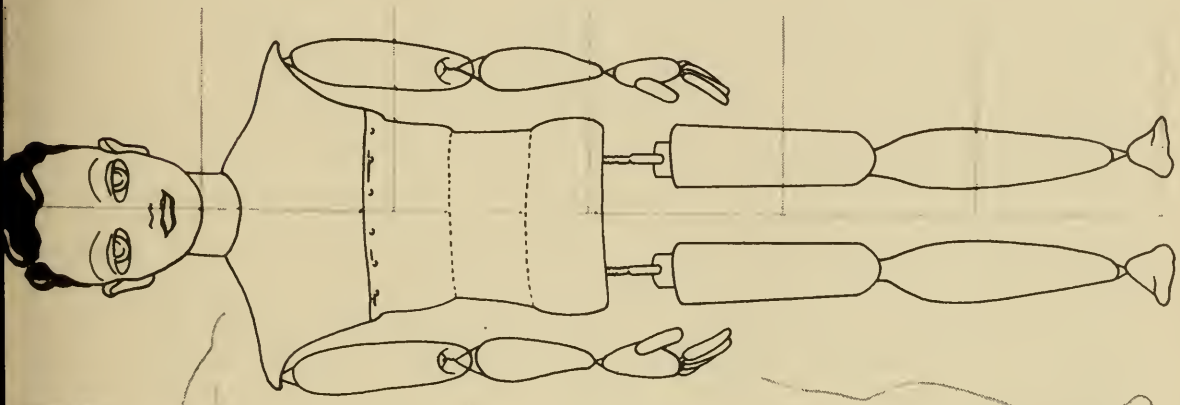
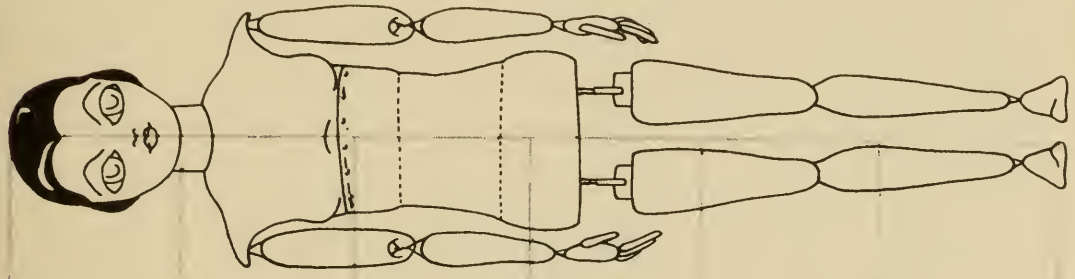
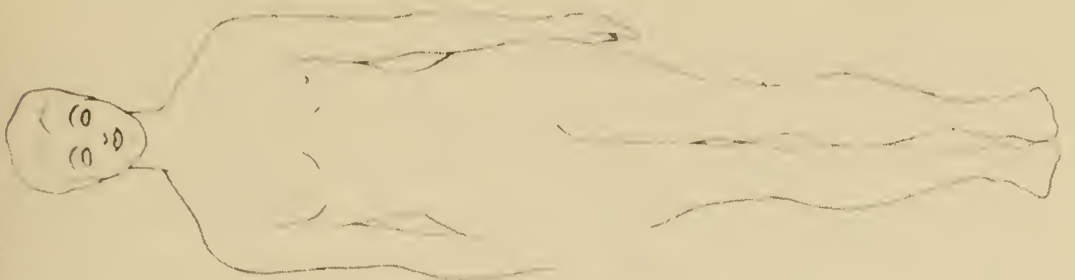
Plate I is a preliminary drawing of the mood the creator desired his puppet to communicate to the audience. The austere ruggedness and barbarity of an Ogre, as conceived by a peasant, are clearly shown. Such a preliminary sketch is most important, for from it will be made a working drawing of the actual puppet, and this first sketch will assist in capturing and incorporating in the finished marionette the spirit and feeling of the character first imagined.

Now to adapt this impractical drawing, and conform it to marionette demands and qualifications. This second drawing is in direct contrast to the first, for it is drawn in exact proportion—not in human proportion, however, but in puppet proportion. Although they often give that impression, marionettes are not simply miniature replicas of humans; if they were, their charm and character would be lacking. This fact is seldom understood by the novice.

PLEASING DISTORTION

The head of the puppet is much larger, in proportion to his body, than is that of a man (see Plate II). For a puppet's head is about one-sixth of his total height, while a man's head represents only two-fifteenths of his entire height. The large head gives greater opportunity for effective, easily discerned facial features, often necessary to impress correctly the audience as to the character of the puppet. Although his head is exaggerated, the puppet's shoulders are not relatively broad-

HUMAN PROPORTIONS
PLATE II



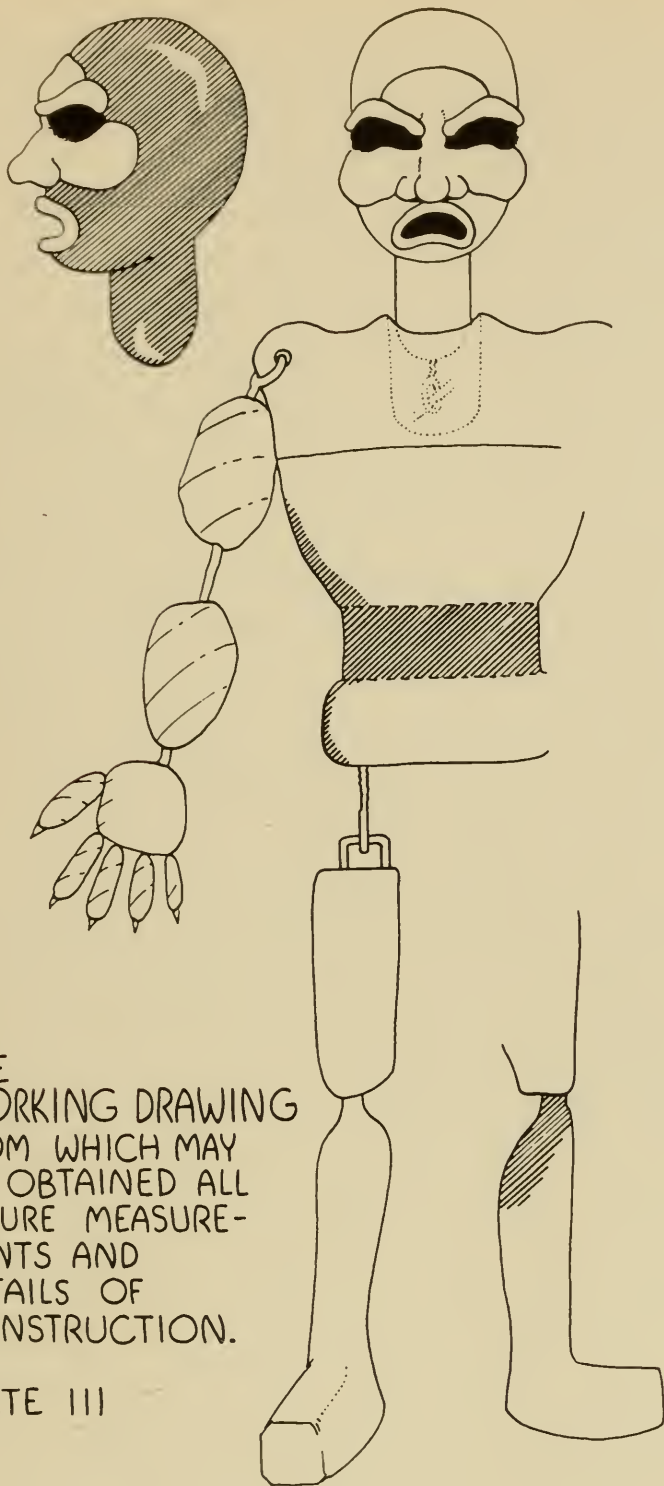
MAKING MARIONETTES

ened. His hands are usually enlarged, often to the extent of caricature.

Notice, also, the similarities of man and puppet, for these similarities are vital. The audience will feel that the figures are weirdly distorted if these likenesses are not incorporated in the puppet. The hands always reach approximately halfway between hip and knee; the elbow is at the waist line; the upper and lower leg are of almost equal length; a man's hips are usually narrower than his shoulders, while a woman's hips and shoulders are of about equal width; and the man's body is short in proportion to the length of his legs, while the woman's body is long and her legs short.

While adhering to the above physical specifications, the entire marionette must be exaggerated and almost caricatured. Each marionette is a character all his own—he is different from the other members of the troupe. Even though he is only eighteen inches high, and the audience is a distance away, this difference must be very visible, making the character individual and easily identified. If a puppet is to appear short and fat, he must be made not simply "short and fat," but "very short and very fat." And all "short and fat" puppets need not look alike, for a puppet can be fat in equally as many varied and humorous ways as can a human.

Considering the differences and similarities of human and puppet proportions, and the need of exaggeration, make the drawing, showing front and side views, with detail as to just how the limbs are to be constructed (see Plate III). (In the drawing for your first puppet, detail as to joints and construction will necessarily be omitted. Once you have an under-



20"

THE
WORKING DRAWING
FROM WHICH MAY
BE OBTAINED ALL
FIGURE MEASURE-
MENTS AND
DETAILS OF
CONSTRUCTION.

PLATE III

MAKING MARIONETTES

standing of the various types of limbs and joints that may be used, as well as the limitations and requisites of costumes, such necessary information will be included in your drawings.) A heavy durable paper should be used for this drawing, since it will undergo much hard wear and must be rugged enough to endure a life among hammers and saws and drills.

It is most convenient to draw your figure half as tall as the actual puppet will be. If you are building an "eighteen-inch puppet" make the drawn figure nine inches tall. Then the distances will be merely doubled in transferring the measurements from paper to the wood, making it simple to find, for instance, how long the actual puppet arm will be, without performing any complicated mathematics. If the drawing shows the arm to be three and one-half inches long, the actual puppet arm will be seven inches long. Thus all complicated ratios and consequent errors are avoided.

When your construction drawing is completed, you will feel that your life as a puppeteer has begun in a sensible, competent manner. With such definite, carefully-made plans, all hodge-podge guessing is eliminated, and a well-proportioned marionette, reflecting the character you first imagined, is practically assured.

Chapter Two

T O A R M S

LIKE a stock company actor of the Gay Nineties, the puppet relies upon his arms and hands to express all emotions. Through the movements of his arms and the intonation of his voice, the marionette shows joy or sadness, surprise or fear. Even were he capable of skillfully mimicking every human emotional expression, such dramatics would be wasted. For ordinary puppets are so diminutive in size that details of expression would be no more perceptible to the observer than is fine decoration in a ceiling mural. Obviously then, if your marionette is to be a clever actor he must be endowed with arms and hands that will capably perform the required gestures, and will, in themselves, express the doll's character.

Look at your own hands and arms and analyze their construction and proportions. Notice that at the shoulder the arm operates in a ball and socket joint, allowing free movement in all directions. The elbow and wrist, however, operate on hinge joints which considerably limit movement. Also note that the upper arm is slightly longer than the forearm, and that the length of the hand equals the distance between the owner's chin and hair line. All human arms are constructed in this same fashion and conform to these general proportions.

The puppet arm usually recognizes the limitations and allow-

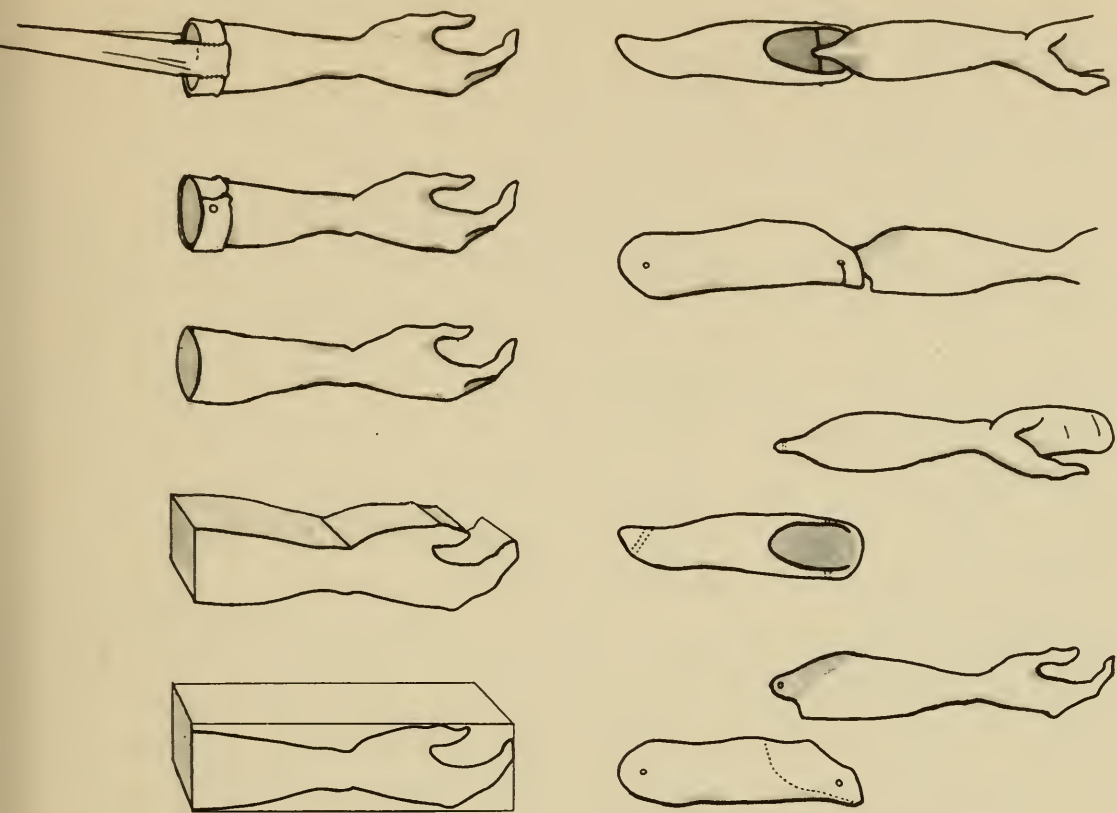
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ances governing human arm construction and proportions. The puppet arm moves freely at the shoulder but is more limited at both wrist and elbow. Since the puppet head is made exaggeratedly large, the hands may also be somewhat enlarged. Just as a beautiful masculine arm glows with rhythmic muscle prominences and depressions, while the feminine arm is one of gentle curves, so the puppet hero's bared arms are thicker and more muscular than those of the heroine.

The marionette construction explained herein may be broadly divided into two separate classifications: wooden marionette construction, and cloth marionette construction. It is true that often features of both types are incorporated in one puppet, but the majority of marionettes fall definitely into one or the other category. For professional and mature productions, the wooden marionette is almost exclusively used because of his superior abilities; for elementary school projects, the cloth puppet is usually preferred because of his simplicity. Therefore these two types of construction will, as far as possible, be considered separately.

WOODEN ARMS

The type of wooden arms selected for your puppet will be determined by the motions he must perform and the nature of his costume, as well as of the production at large in which he must appear. Arms may be joined at shoulder, elbow, and wrist; at shoulder and elbow; or simply at the shoulder. Naturally, the most flexible arms permit the most intricate movements. But many puppets, especially those portraying minor



WOODEN ARMS
 THE HUMAN ARM IS THE PATTERN FOR
 PUPPET ARM CONSTRUCTION AND PROPORTION.
 THE FOREARM IS CARVED FROM A PIECE
 OF SOFT WOOD AND SUSPENDED FROM
 THE SHOULDER BY A NARROW MUSLIN STRIP.
 THE ARM ENTIRELY OF WOOD IS JOINTED
 AT ELBOW AND SHOULDER WITH PICTURE
 WIRE IN A MANNER PERMITTING ROTARY
 MOTION AT THE SHOULDER AND HINGE
 MOTION AT THE ELBOW.

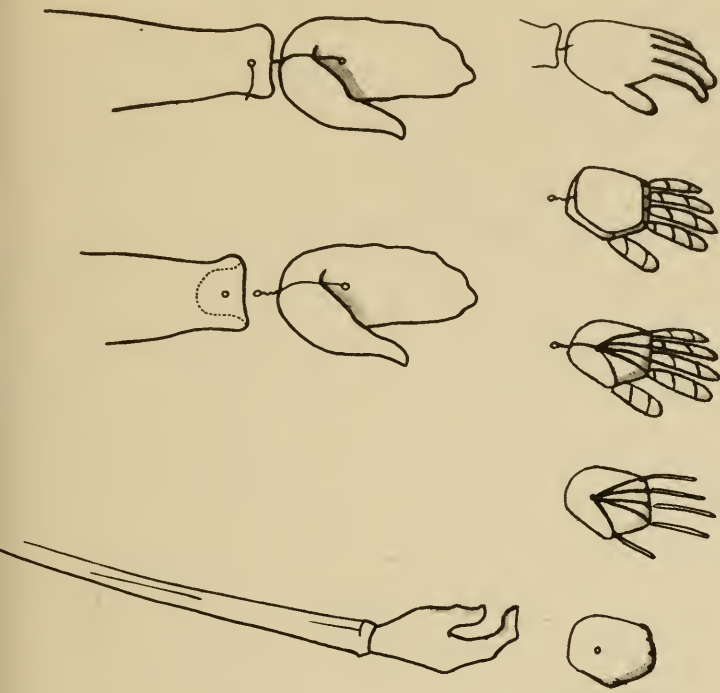
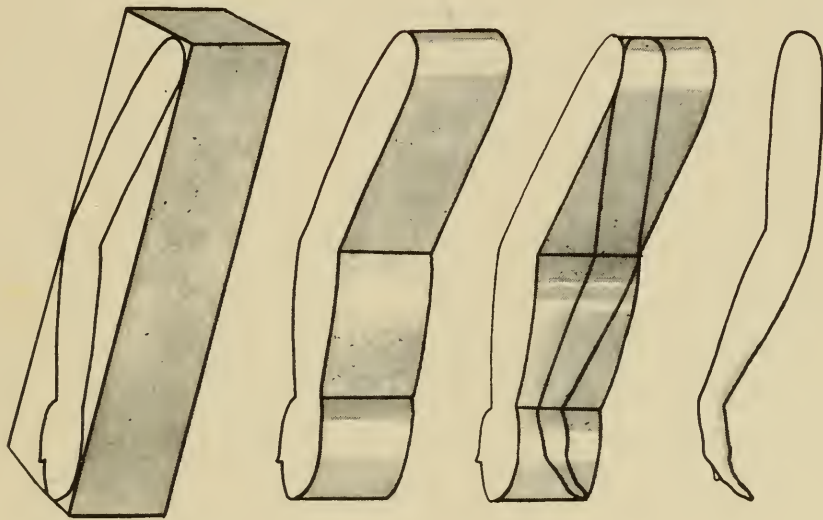
MAKING MARIONETTES

roles in plays, require no intricacy of movement, and for them simple arms are preferable.

DOUBLE-JOINTED

The arm jointed at elbow and shoulder is suitable for most puppets and is, perhaps, the simplest wooden arm to make. From the working drawing of your puppet, calculate the length of the arm from elbow to finger-tips. Then draw or trace the lower arm silhouette on a piece of smooth birch or soft cedar (see Plate IV). With your jack-knife carve out the arm, aiming for smoothness of line and suggestion, rather than realistic representation. ¶ The hand may have only a mitten-like mass for fingers, with, perhaps, a thumb well separated from the palm. If the sleeve covers the elbow, a cloth upper arm will suffice. Simply brad a narrow strip of strong muslin around the sawed-off top of the lower arm. Then sew a strip twice as long as the measured length of the upper arm to this band, with an end at both sides of the arm. The apex of the "V" or loop which results is then ready to be sewed or tacked to the shoulder.

But if the upper arm is to be revealed it, as well as the lower arm, may be carved of wood. The simple elbow joint illustrated consists of no more than a wooden loop suspended on several strands of stout picture wire. Although easy to construct, this joining allows the lower arm free movement in only a forward direction, just as the hinge joint of the human elbow permits only forward action. The lower arm should hang loosely from the upper—so loosely that the arm of the



WOODEN ARMS

PLATE V

THE ARM JOINTED ONLY AT THE SHOULDER MUST BE CARVED IN A GRACEFUL POSITION.

WHEN THE ARM IS TO BE COMPLETELY COVERED BY THE COSTUME, A WOODEN HAND ATTACHED TO A MUSLIN STRIP IS VERY SATISFACTORY.

THE SEPARATE WOODEN HAND IS JOINTED LOOSELY TO THE WOODEN FOREARM.

THE HAND WITH WOODEN PALM AND WIRE FINGERS IS SURPRISINGLY REALISTIC.

MAKING MARIONETTES

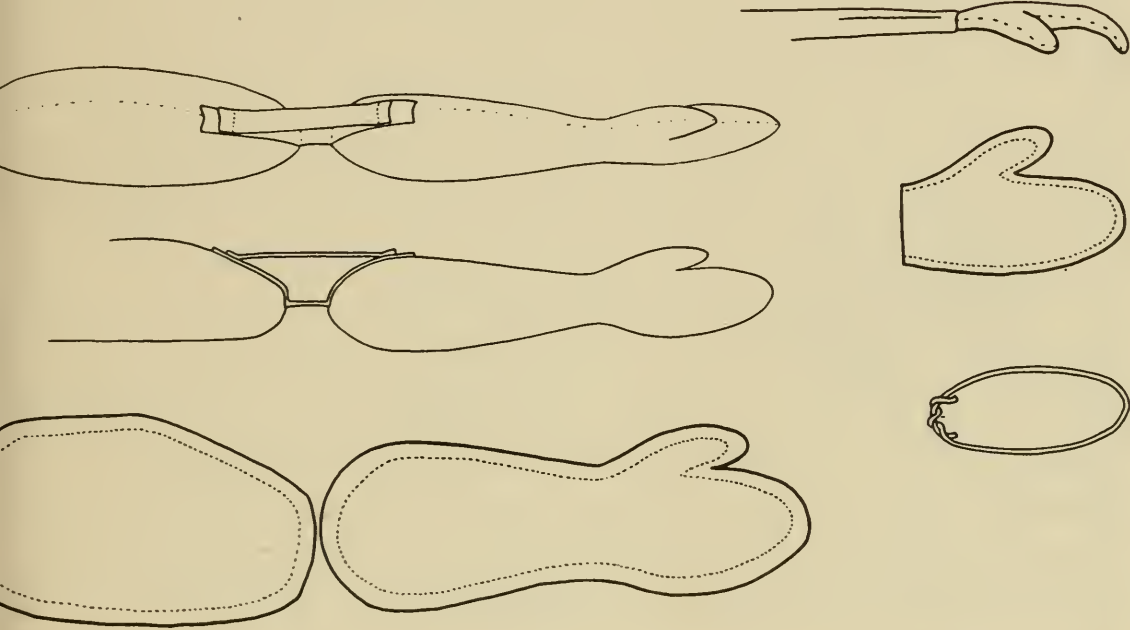
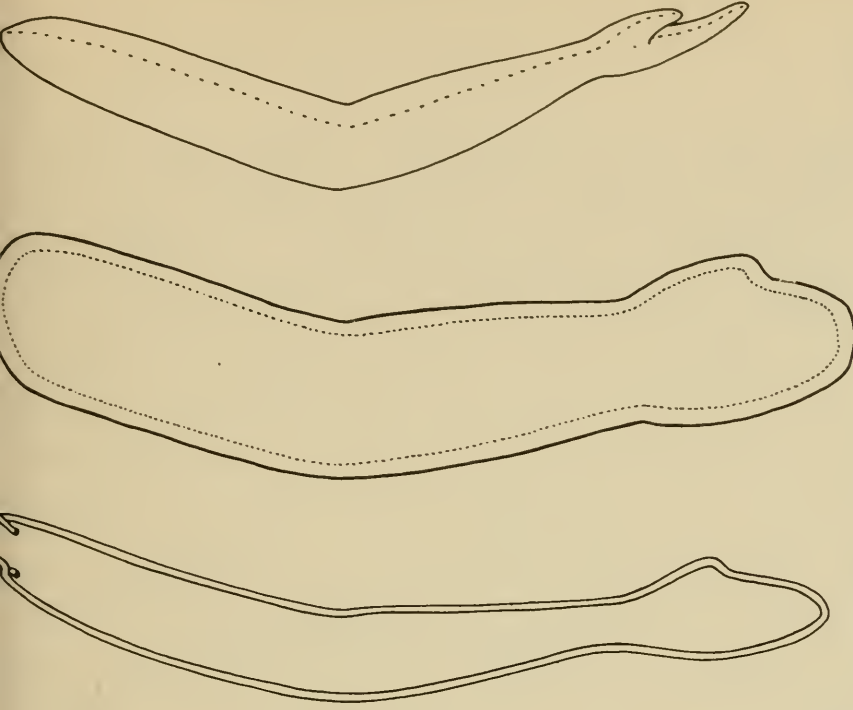
completed marionette will respond to the slightest tension of the strings by the puppeteer.

The freely-moving elbow joint, even though a rather unsightly affair, may be frankly left uncovered. A smoothly performing, although knobby-jointed, puppet is always more desirable than a lovely statuesque figure with stiff, wooden action. Many puppets have all their mechanism in plain view, but the sight of these workings causes no concern to the audience and should cause none to the puppeteer. It is often difficult for him to realize that the marionette seen by the audience is a far different figure from that held in the operator's hand. Light and distance lend illusion.

The most flexible arm, of course, is that jointed at the wrist as well as at the elbow and shoulder. Usually the jointed wrist is unnecessary; however, it is a delight to work with a marionette so endowed, for the hands constantly fall in realistic positions so that the figure seems indeed possessed of life. To construct such an arm, the lower arm is severed at the wrist and the hand loosely wired into a slight hollow at the wrist base (see Plate V). Again the joined section must hang freely so that the unstrung arm will dangle in a loose and limber fashion.

It is often effective to equip marionettes with hands with separated wire fingers. To a small piece of wood with hole in center, wire fingers and thumb are attached and bound with thin strips of adhesive tape. The fingers are then pressed together and curved into any desired position.

CLOTH ARMS
 PLATE VI
 THE CLOTH ARM BENDING AT ELBOW AND SHOULDER
 IS JOINED WITH NARROW STRIPS OF MUSLIN.
 A SIMPLE WIRE FORM IS INSERTED IN THE ARM
 WHICH MOVES ONLY AT THE SHOULDER. AFTER THE
 ARM IS STUFFED, IT IS BENT INTO GRACEFUL POSITION.
 THE HAND WITH WIRE FOUNDATION ASSUMES LIFE-
 LIKE FORM.



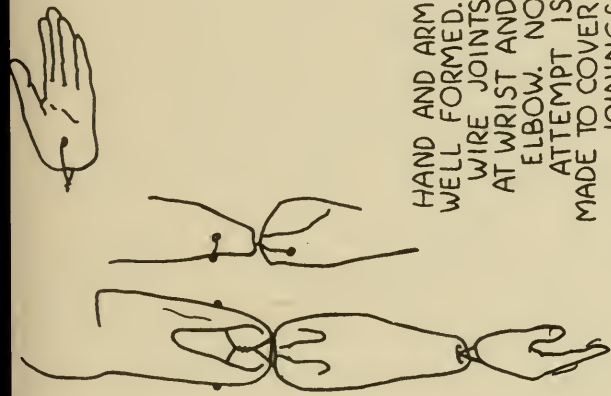
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FROZEN GRACE

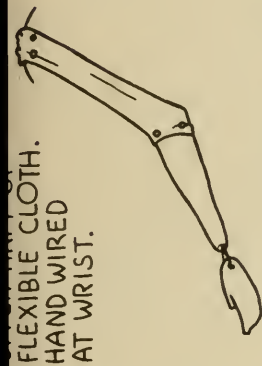
It might seem that the jointless arm, flexible only at the shoulder, would be the easiest to construct, but on the contrary such an arm, which is most effective for a scantily clad dancer, is often very difficult to make. If cleverly constructed, such an arm will not give a stiff appearance but will, instead, be graceful and expressive. Therein lies the difficulty, for in whatever position the arm is carved, in that position the arm must always remain. Not only must the arm be graceful when in repose, but also when raised at shoulder level or above the head. Considerable planning and care should be given to the arm silhouette before the carving is commenced. The arm should flow in a graceful, gently-curving line, with a slight bend at the elbow and with the hand in an arched position (see Plate VIII). Since there can be little of realism about an unjointed arm, the tendency should well be toward conventionalization and simplicity of line.

In direct contrast to this unjointed arm is that which consists of no more than a wooden hand attached to a heavy, but very pliant, cord (see Plate VII.) This extremely simple arm covered, of course, by a long sleeve, is surprisingly effective when the puppet is in motion.

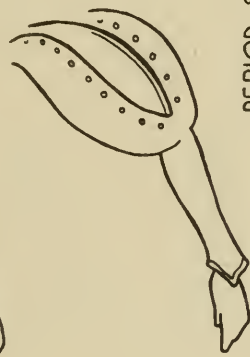
Arms, as well as hands, should always express the character of the marionette to which they belong. Arms may be short and stocky or long and thin to fit the owner. Hands may be pudgy stubs or narrow bony affairs. Veins of adhesive tape may be raised on the backs of witches' and old people's hands and painted a glossy purple or bluish-gray. Ogres and giants



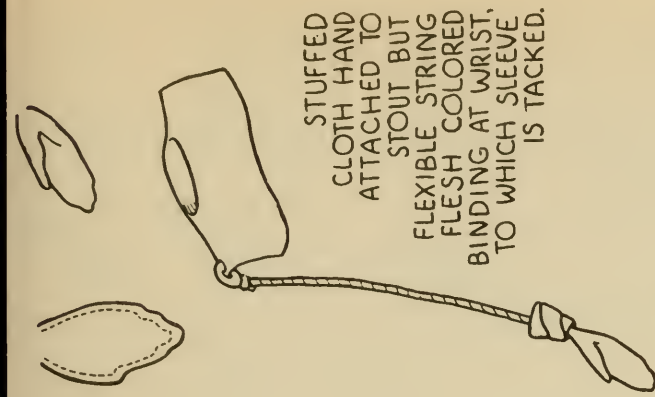
HAND AND ARM
WELL FORMED.
WIRE JOINTS
AT WRIST AND
ELBOW. NO
ATTEMPT IS
MADE TO COVER
JOININGS.



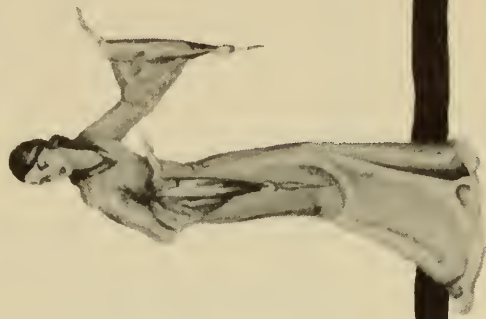
FLEXIBLE CLOTH.
HAND WIRED
AT WRIST.



PERIOD SLEEVE
COVERS THIN
UPPER ARM
AND WRIST
JOINING.



STUFFED
CLOTH HAND
ATTACHED TO
STOUT BUT
FLEXIBLE STRING
FLESH COLORED
BINDING AT WRIST,
TO WHICH SLEEVE
IS TACKED.



MAKING MARIONETTES

may even have warts and patches of crepe hair on their arms and the backs of their hands.

CLOTH ARMS

Cloth arms are simply and quickly made, but unless carefully designed, they unfortunately possess a certain clumsiness. Surprisingly, the tendency of cloth marionettes is toward stiffness which, as a rule, may be attributed to faulty joining of the separate limbs. It is well for any puppeteer desiring to use cloth marionettes, to study human movement and to attempt to achieve in his cloth figures the flexibility of a well-constructed wooden puppet.

Just as with the wooden marionette, an arm jointed only at the shoulder and wrist is effective and adequate for most cloth puppets (see Plate VI). The pattern of the lower arm is cut from heavy muslin, sewed with generous seams, and stuffed with kapok, which, because of its pliable quality, is more practical than scraps, which often produce knobby limbs. If necessary, during the stuffing BB shot may be placed in the fingers to weight the arms. This cloth lower arm may be attached to the shoulder by a muslin strip. If the upper arm requires more bulk than that afforded by the muslin strip, an upper arm may be stuffed and carefully joined, allowing only the forward movement of the lower arm. This joint should permit the forearm to hang very loosely.

Separate cloth hands may be constructed about a simple wire form (heavy picture wire is suitable for this purpose) and meagerly stuffed with kapok. The wire form allows the

ARM LONG
AND GRACEFUL,
ENTIRELY WITHOUT
JOINTS EXCEPT
AT SHOULDER.



HAND
PAINTED
BLACK.



BLACK SILK
GLUED ON
ARM BUT
LOOSE OVER
ELBOW.



HAND AND
SILK DOTTED
WITH
FLESH-COLORED
PAINT.



UPPER ARM
PAINTED COLOR
OF SLEEVE LINING.



CIRCULAR
BAND OF
LINING GLUED
TO LOWER ARM
AT ELBOW.



SLEEVE
SEWED TO
BAND AT "X".



ARM DETAILS
PLATE VIII

MAKING MARIONETTES

hand to be bent into a natural curved position. This separate cloth hand is effective when attached either to a stuffed cloth arm or to an arm consisting of no more than a stout but flexible cord.

Cloth arms jointed only at the shoulder are seldom successful, although in a few limited instances such arms may be employed. Unless carefully made, this type of arm will have awkwardness instead of the almost plastic beauty which it should possess. It is best when built about a wire skeleton which may be bent, upon completion of the arm, to curve naturally and gracefully.

You will be amazed and delighted by the numerous lifelike positions in which these cloth arms will fall, and by the illusion which distance and lights will give to what, scrutinized closely, may appear to you as crude and ugly.

And now your puppet is armed. Undoubtedly he is as anxious as you are to see what sort of brow these hands will wipe, and what sort of knees these hands will rest upon.



Chapter Three

HOP, SKIP, AND JUMP

IS THERE anything more delightfully typical of the marionette than his lilting, springy gait? Invariably, after the curtain has risen on a puppet show, when the first marionette struts across the stage a pleased titter passes over the audience. The art of walking in proper human fashion is something which marionettes, through the ages, have never achieved. At first this lack of ability on the part of his marionette may discourage the over-conscientious puppeteer, but soon he will come to realize that this gait is something purely puppet—an amusing expression of the marionette's own personality. Nevertheless, the puppeteer will undoubtedly always continue to form puppet legs as much like those of humans as possible—and always the puppet will spring along in his own gay fashion.

Again reverting to your own body as the pattern for constructing your marionette figure, you will discover that the thigh moves on a ball and socket joint at the hip, allowing rotary movement rather similar to that of the arm at the shoulder. The knee and ankle, like the elbow and wrist, move on hinge joints which considerably limit movement. The upper and lower legs are of very much the same length, while the foot is almost half the length from the knee to the heel. All

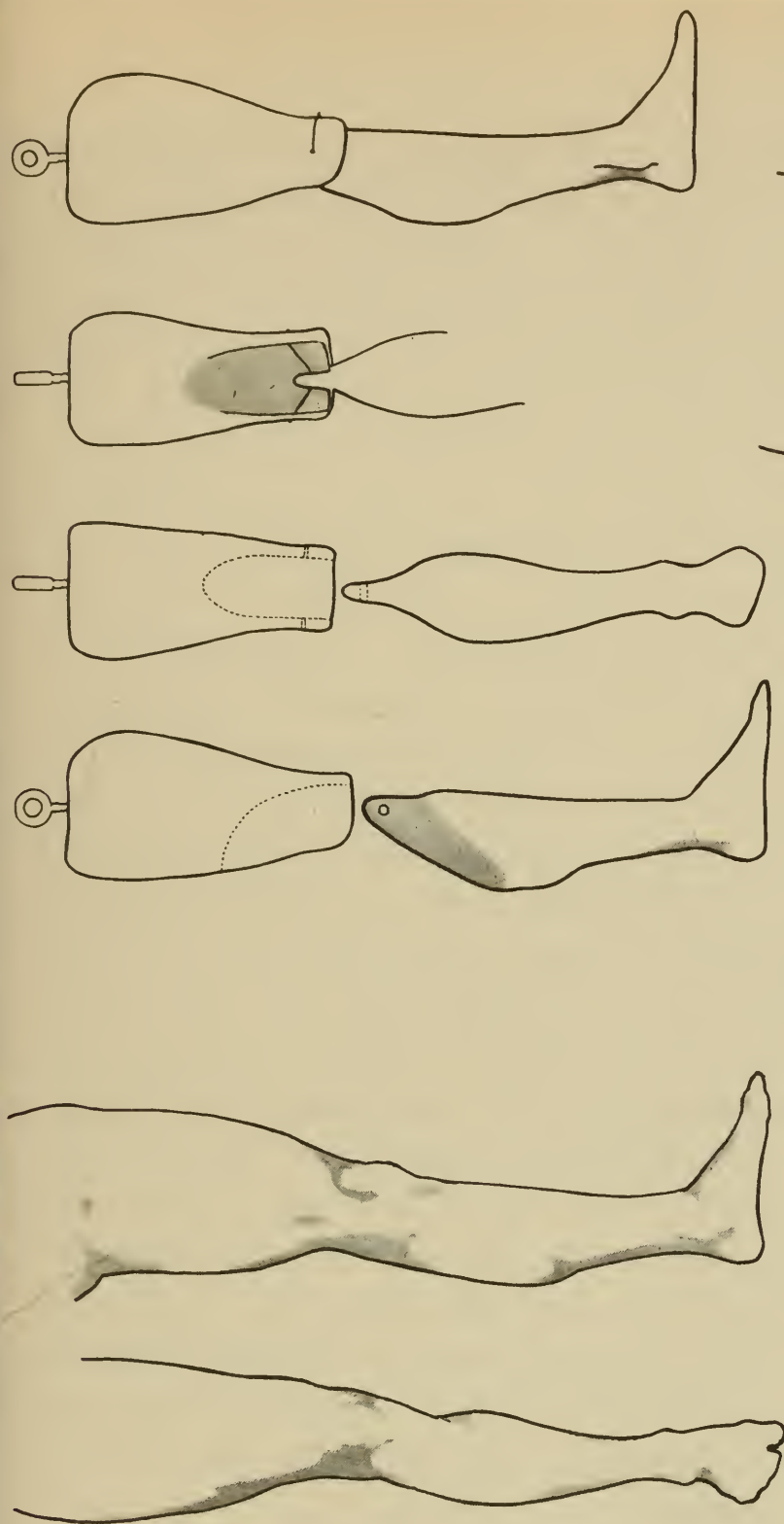
MAKING MARIONETTES

these human physical features are incorporated in the marionette, with the exception that the foot is often made exaggeratedly large. The male leg is made rather knobby and vital with muscles in the thigh and calf, while the female leg is formed with smooth and beautiful curves.

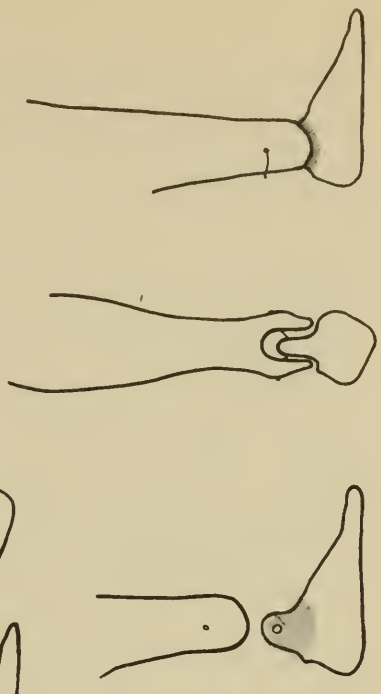
WOODEN LEGS

The most commonly used wooden puppet leg is that which has joints only at the knee and hip (see Plate IX). Such a leg permits the figure to walk in approved puppet fashion, and yet is extremely simple to construct. Again turning to the working drawing of your marionette, gauge the length of the leg from knee to heel. Trace this lower leg silhouette on a smooth piece of wood, forming a curved top where the upper and lower legs join at the knee. Carve the foot itself in whatever form the completed puppet foot is to be. That is, if the foot is to have a modern leather shoe, carve the shoe in the required shape, ready for painting. Similarly, the foot may be equipped with ballet slippers, Russian boots, native sandals, or Hindu slippers. Naturally, if the leg is to be covered by trousers or pantaloons to the very ankles, it is unnecessary to pay particular attention to the leg shape above that point. In such instances, a roughly shaped calf and thigh will serve altogether as well as a finely carved leg with muscles and bony prominences. As with the arm, the important consideration is flexible joining, allowing the limbs to hang freely in order to respond to the slightest pull on the strings of the completed marionette.

A fairly satisfactory leg can be obtained by tacking a strong



WOODEN LEGS PLATE IX
 THE HUMAN LEG REVEALS BONE AND MUSCLE
 PROMINENCES WHICH MAY BE INCORPORATED
 IN THE PUPPET LEG.
 THE UPPER LEG IS HOLLOWED OUT AT THE
 BACK TO PERMIT FREE BACKWARD BENDING OF
 THE LOWER LIMB.
 JOINTED AT THE ANKLE BY PICTURE WIRE,
 THE FOOT MOVES IN DELIGHTFUL
 FASHION.

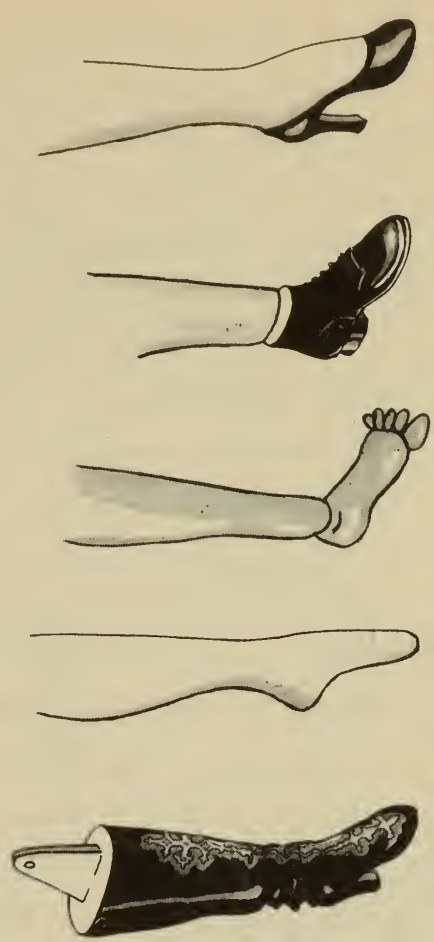
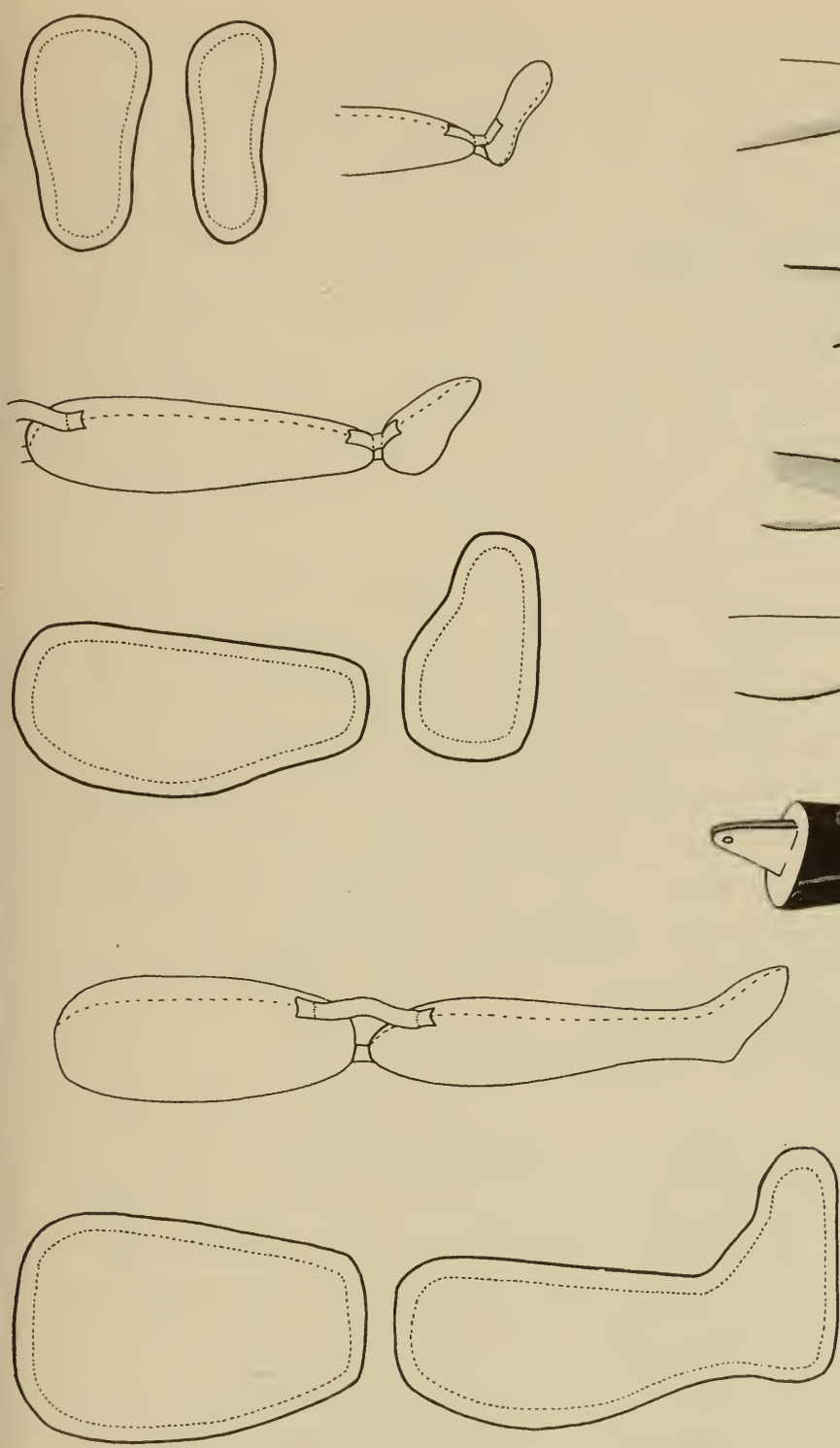


MAKING MARIONETTES

strip of muslin the length of the upper leg, to the carved lower leg at the knee, and to the hips. Obviously this type of leg must be covered by the costume since it is a very unsightly affair. A far more satisfactory leg is obtained by carving a wooden thigh with rounded knob at the top where the thigh joins the hip. At the back of the knee, this thigh limb is hollowed out, well up to the hip. The lower leg is fastened to this upper limb by picture wire. Through experimenting it will be discovered exactly how much of both the upper and lower leg must be carved away in order to permit free movement backward at the knee. Since the front of the thigh is not at all hollowed out, the leg is not permitted to bend forward at the knee, but can only bend in hinge fashion.

A foot flexible at the ankle is delightful because of its faculty for constantly describing human movement. When the puppet is seated with one leg crossed over the other, the foot will hang naturally forward instead of remaining stiffly at right angles, as will the foot with unjointed ankle. The value of the flexible foot is also apparent when the marionette dances and walks. In constructing such a foot, the lower leg is severed at the ankle, and a slot-like hollow formed for the foot joining to enter (see Plate IX). The foot is wired to the ankle, and should hang rather loosely while held well in its forward position. To the foot may be wired individual toes, bound with strips of adhesive tape. This is always an amusing touch for native puppets, or bare-footed children, especially if the toes are made exaggeratedly large and spread well apart in order to be rather conspicuous.

Before the leg is joined to the body, drill tiny holes at the



CLOTH LEGS PLATE X

THE CLOTH LEG IS JOINTED AT THE KNEE TO ALLOW ONLY BACKWARD MOVEMENT. THE FOOT JOINTED AT THE ANKLE MOVES EASILY AND NATURALLY. LEGS MAY BE CARVED AND PAINTED WITH SHOES, SLIPPERS, OR BOOTS.

MAKING MARIONETTES

knee cap, or at the knee cap and the middle of the foot, to facilitate stringing the puppet after it is costumed.

Ordinarily, it is unnecessary to place either shoes or stockings on wooden puppets, since these articles are more practical when simply painted over the carved shapes (see Plate X). There are, however, instances when stockings are almost essential. Dancers and fairies with short, frilly skirts which reveal their legs from the hips, often require stockings to cover the mechanism at the knee. The foot also must then be covered with the stocking, and the shoe painted on the cloth.

If the floor of the stage is not carpeted in some manner, the wooden feet of the puppets clack in rather gay fashion as they walk. This is sometimes desirable when puppets dance, but often, too, is incongruous with the characters of certain marionettes. For instance, it would seem rather inconsistent for the pointed slippers of the sleek Hindu magician to clatter as he walked across the stage. To avoid this, tiny strips of felt may be glued along the soles of the shoes, making it possible for the figure to walk in an appropriate noiseless manner.

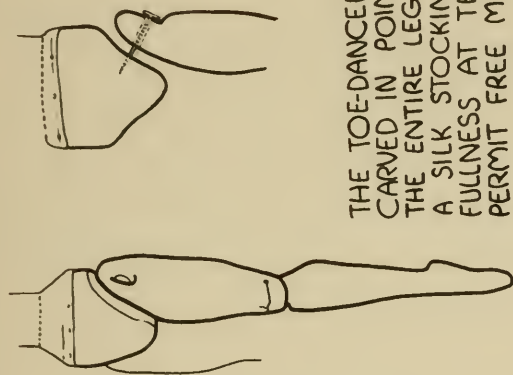
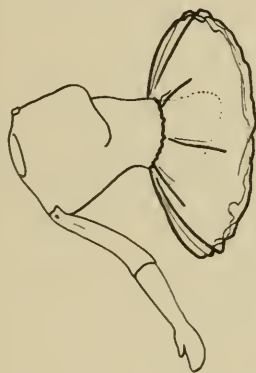
CLOTH LEGS

If the cloth marionette is to avoid clumsiness, his legs must be flexible enough at the joints to allow natural movements, and yet strong enough to partially bear the weight which is upon them. Naturally the weight of the moving marionette is held in the operator's hands—the puppet is suspended by the strings rather than standing, like a human, with the weight resting on his legs. However, when an operator is compelled

WITH SEVERAL FRILLS OF
BUCKRAM UNDER THE SKIRT
TO MAINTAIN HOOPED
FULLNESS, LEGS ARE
NOT AT ALL NECESSARY.



THE PUPPET WITH
HOOP SKIRT MAY
HAVE A BODY
CARVED ENTIRELY
OF WOOD.



THE HIPS ARE
CARVED IN A V
SHAPE, AND THE
LEGS SUSPENDED
LOOSELY BY
NAILS.

THE TOE-DANCER'S LEGS ARE
CARVED IN POINTED POSITION.
THE ENTIRE LEG IS COVERED BY
A SILK STOCKING, WITH SLIGHT
FULLNESS AT THE KNEE TO
PERMIT FREE MOVEMENT.



LEG DETAILS
PLATE XI

MAKING MARIONETTES

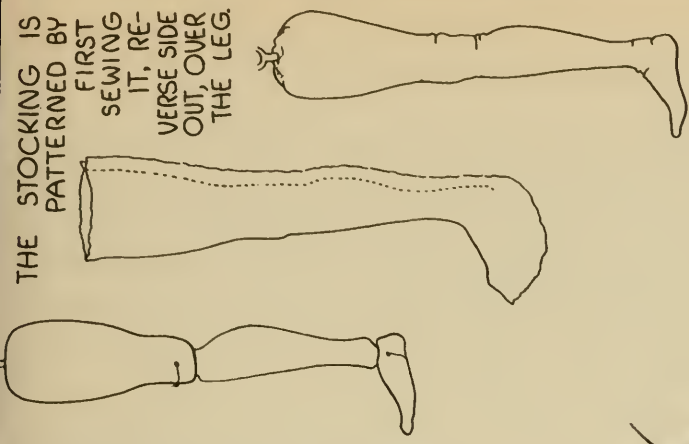
to manipulate more than one figure at once, he undoubtedly will rest one puppet rather firmly on his feet. If the legs do not have any stiffness to them, they will crumple under the weight and give an undesirable bow-legged or knock-kneed effect. In order to obtain a proper balance between flexibility and stiffness, it is well to place a small stick, as bone, down the limbs, and pack the fleshy part of the leg firmly with kapok. The joints, on the other hand, should be very loose to permit free movement when the marionette is in action. Consideration of this simple point may well determine the success of the cloth puppet.

The cloth leg is always jointed at the knee and hip, and sometimes, though infrequently, at the ankle (see Plate X). The patterns are again cut from heavy muslin, sewed together, and stuffed with kapok. Matches or any small sticks of wood are used for stiffening. The ends of these pieces of wood are sandpapered so that there are no sharp corners to jut through the cloth. A few lead BB shot are placed at both knee and foot in order to weight the legs.

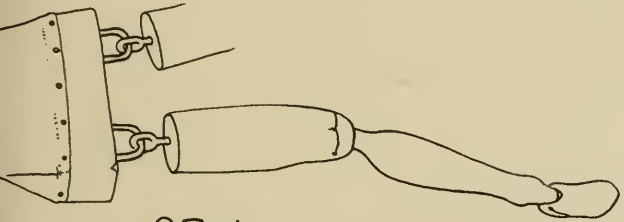
When the foot is flexible at the ankle, it may be seamed either up the front of the foot or at the sides, depending, of course, upon the effect the foot is to give. The latter foot is more stable than the former, but gives a flat-footed and almost humorous shuffling appearance. This foot jointed at the ankle may also be made by cutting a foot pattern from stiff cardboard and wrapping this form with muslin. Individual cloth toes may be tacked to the feet of cloth puppets for humorous effect.

Many marionettes of both wooden and cloth construction

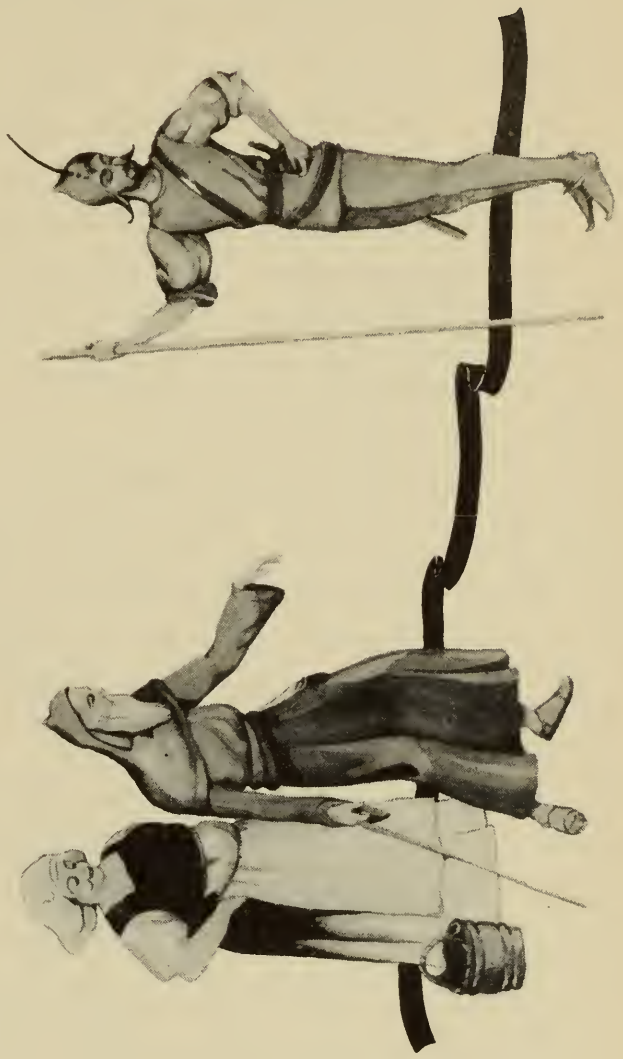
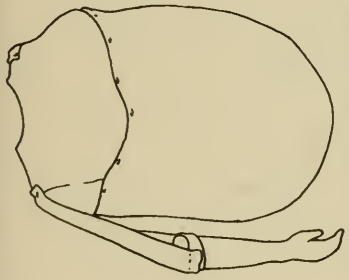
THE STOCKING IS
PATTERNED BY
FIRST
SEWING
IT, RE-
VERSE SIDE
OUT, OVER
THE LEG.



WHEN THE
PUPPET IS
DRESSED IN
CLINGING
ROBES, IT IS
PREFERABLE TO
USE WOODEN
LEGS SINCE
THE GARMENT
WILL REVEAL
THE LEG
SHAPE.



THE FAT PUPPET
WITH SKIRT TO THE FLOOR,
NEEDS ONLY A FULL
SACK FOR A BODY
AND NO LEGS
AT ALL.

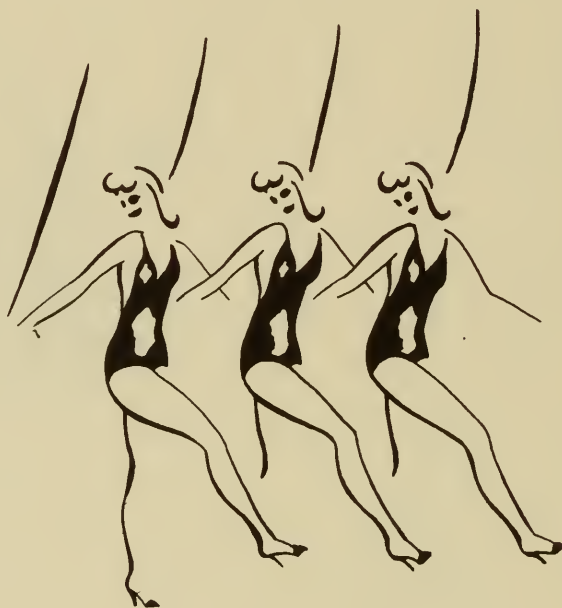


LEG DETAILS
PLATE XII

MAKING MARIONETTES

need no legs whatever. If the legs do not show—that is, if they are entirely covered by a full skirt or long flowing robe—there is no use in fashioning even the simplest type of legs (see Plates XI and XII). If the garments are full, the audience will not even suspect that the puppets are legless.

And now your puppet has correctly proportioned arms and legs which, although they seem ridiculously disjointed and separate, will fit perfectly with the head and body which you will construct. You may be sure that these dangling limbs will soon help to compose a pleasing and well-performing marionette.



Chapter Four

RIGHT FACE

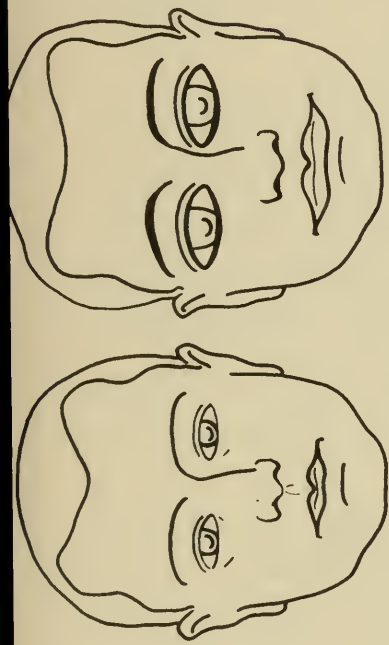
THERE is no art more closely related to the puppet as a figure than that of caricature. Just as in this art of exaggerated drawing to express character and individuality, the head is large and ridiculously overdrawn, so in puppetry heads are disproportionately executed with accentuated and often grotesque features. Surely the caricaturist enjoys mimicking his subjects, just as the puppeteer fairly revels in modeling the heads for his marionettes. Here the puppeteer is afforded free range for his imagination, making the head the most artistically creative and enjoyable feature of marionette construction.

In studying briefly the fundamentals of head and face caricaturing (see Plate XIV), it is at once apparent that the secret of the art lies in discovering and reproducing through the artist's medium, even the slightest differences in head shapes and feature forms. The caricaturist analyzes his subject and determines which features he will exaggerate and which diminish. Having decided that the large nose or widely separated eyes are the distinguishing feature of a certain face, the caricaturist subordinates the remaining features to this one identifying characteristic—giving strength and power to his drawing through the use of simple lines.

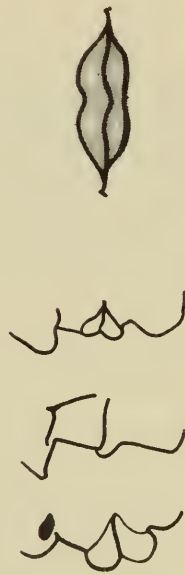
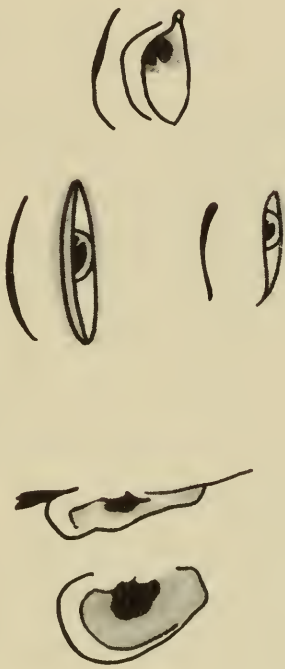
MAKING MARIONETTES

These few fundamentals are of great value to the puppeteer modeling a head which he realizes must be seen and identified from a distance of ten or fifty feet, notwithstanding the fact that the head itself is only a few inches high. If the puppeteer did not borrow from the art of the caricaturist, the heads of the marionettes would appear to the audience as monotonous, stereotyped blurs, without significance or character. It is for this reason that puppets are now invariably proportioned with large heads and exaggerated features.

But before a caricaturist commences to distort the features of his subjects in order cleverly to reveal identity and character, he has a basic understanding of head proportions, just as the modern painter, although he later draws his studies in unnatural, distorted positions, first thoroughly understands the principles of perspective. Certain fundamental head proportions should be understood by the puppeteer before he commences modeling (see Plate XIII). In studying the relation of your own facial features to your head, you will probably be most surprised to discover that the eyes are located on an imaginary line drawn halfway between the chin and the top of the head. The tendency is always to place the eyes too high, leaving no room for the forehead which is necessary to give intelligence to the face. Another point which may be surprising is that the ear is located between imaginary lines drawn from the tip of the nose and from the eyebrow line. A head seems strangely unnatural when the ears are placed very much above, or very much below, this position. The head itself is fundamentally an egg shape, placed at a slight angle on the cylinder of the neck.



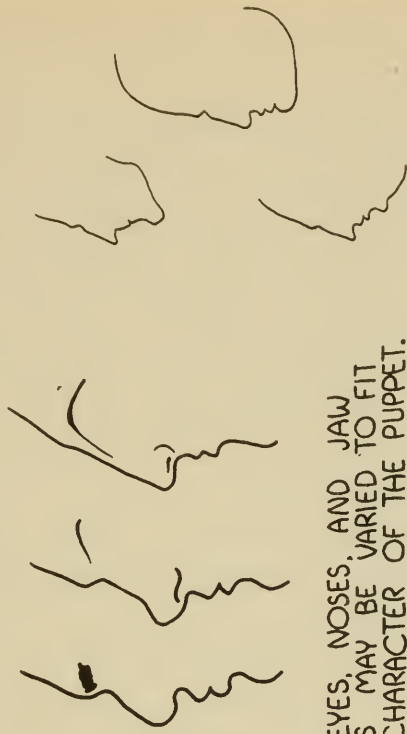
HUMAN FACIAL PROPORTIONS CONTRASTED WITH THOSE OF THE MARIONETTE.



HEAD AND FEATURE PROPORTIONS
PLATE XIII



BORROWING A TRICK FROM THE CARICATURIST, THE PUPPETEER MAY WIDELY VARY THE HEAD SHAPES OF HIS FIGURES.



LIPS, EYES, NOSES, AND JAW SHAPES MAY BE VARIED TO FIT THE CHARACTER OF THE PUPPET.



A SIMPLE KNOWLEDGE OF FACIAL LINES IN VARIOUS EXPRESSIONS IS HELPFUL IN MODELING PUPPET HEADS.

MAKING MARIONETTES

Proportions of children's heads vary quite considerably from those of adults. The foreheads of infants and children are very large; cheeks are fat and round; noses are short and very inconspicuous; eyebrows are light; and the head and facial contours are smooth and soft. The faces of the young are smooth and unwrinkled; of the middle-aged, slightly lined and angular; and of the aged, heavily lined, and with deep-set eyes and protruding cheek and jaw bones.

There is probably nothing more important to remember in modeling puppet heads than that the audience, even to the last person in the hall, must see the features. With such a consideration in mind you will naturally strive for general proportions rather than for details. It is the marionette who looks distorted and exaggerated at close quarters who is most striking and who has most character when seen by the audience.

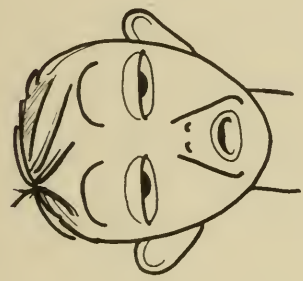
WOODEN PUPPETS

There is a wide range of mediums for the puppeteer to choose from when he selects the material for his marionette head. Many of the historical puppet heads are carved from a single block of wood, but such carving requires considerable patience and skill. Furthermore, the wooden head offers no advantages but is, instead, too heavy for practical purposes unless it is hollowed out. Birch and pine are suggested woods for carving puppet heads.

Simpler than the wooden head, and equally as satisfactory, are heads made of plastic wood, papier-mâché, or wax. To construct the plastic wood or papier-mâché heads, purchase a



THE HAUGHTY,
ARROGANT NOBLEMAN.



THE STUPID
COUNTRY BOY.



THE SOCIETY
WOMAN.



THE COMIC
BUFFOON.



THE ARTIST-
GENIUS.

STUDYING THE
SIMPLE LINES EM-
PLOYED BY THE
CARICATURIST AIDS
THE PUPPETEER IN
GIVING STRENGTH
AND CHARACTER TO
HIS FIGURES.



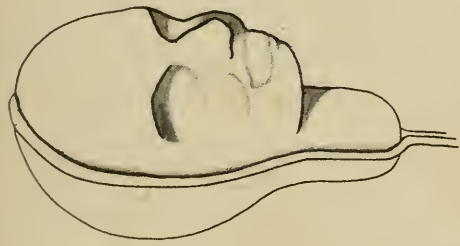
IN FORMING
LIKENESSES OF
HISTORICAL OR
CONTEMPORARY
FIGURES, THE
RULES OF "CARI-
CATURING SHOULD
BE APPLIED.

MAKING MARIONETTES

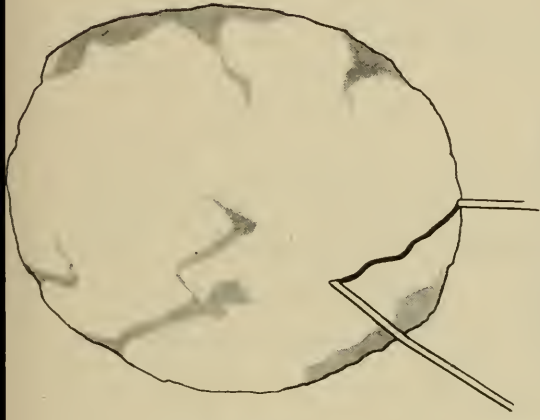
small supply of modeling wax, plasticine, or clay—any of which may be purchased at a very modest price, in a grade which is completely satisfactory for this purpose. Wax may be heated, and clay moistened, to make the medium pliable and easy to work with. Having selected one of these materials, model your head and neck according to the measurements of your working drawing, and the features of your original sketch. Use an orange stick or toothpick to help you in modeling if you do not possess a regular set of tools. Attempt to work toward boldness and simplicity of line, while considering the character and nature of the figure whose head you are constructing. Having modeled the head to your satisfaction, allow it to dry thoroughly.

CASTING

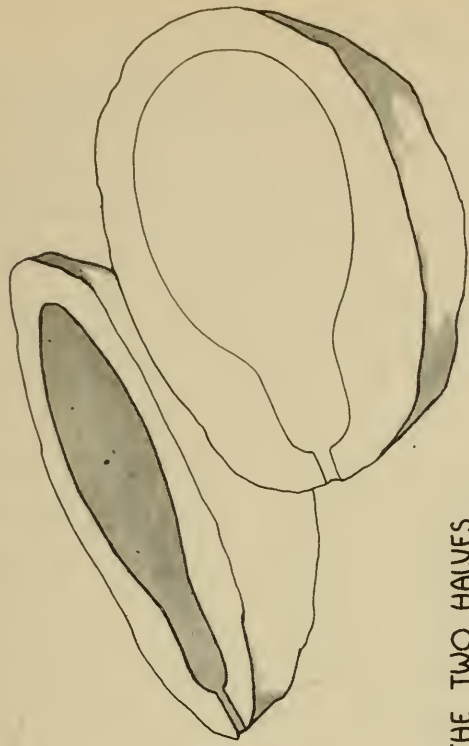
From this modeled head, it is a simple matter to make a plaster cast. Probably the easiest method of doing this is to place a stout cord about the head, passing over the ears and meeting below the base of the neck (see Plate XV). Thoroughly grease the head and string with vaseline or even ordinary baking grease. Then add to a quantity of plaster of Paris, which may be purchased at any hardware or art store, enough water to make the mixture the consistency of thick cream, being sure to eliminate all lumps and air bubbles. Quickly place this plaster mixture completely over the modeled head and string, leaving only the two ends of the string protruding. When the plaster has firmly set, but before it has become hard, carefully pull an end of the string, holding tightly onto the other end. Pulling this string naturally splits the cast in two.



A CORD ENCIRCLES THE MODELED HEAD, AND BOTH HEAD AND CORD ARE THOROUGHLY GREASED.

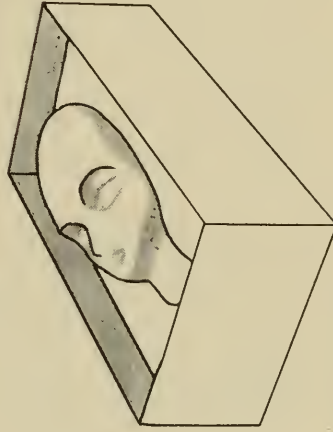


PLASTER OF PARIS IS APPLIED, AND THE CORD PULLED JUST BEFORE THE PLASTER HARDENS.



THE TWO HALVES ARE SEPARATED AND ALLOWED TO DRY.

THE MODELED HEAD IS INSERTED IN A BOX HALF FILLED WITH PLASTER. WHEN THE LOWER HALF HAS HARDENED, THE EXPOSED TOP SURFACE IS GREASED, AND MORE PLASTER APPLIED. THE CAST IS ALLOWED TO DRY, THE HALVES SEPARATED, AND THE MODEL REMOVED.



CASTING THE HEAD

PLATE XV



MAKING MARIONETTES

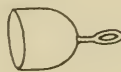
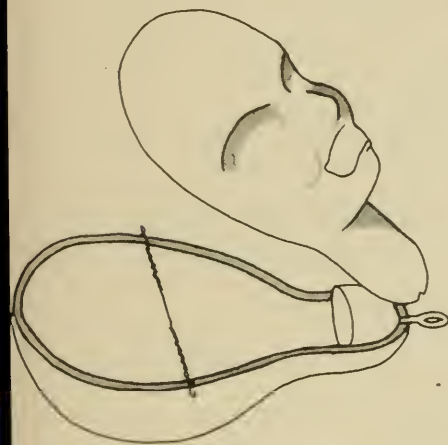
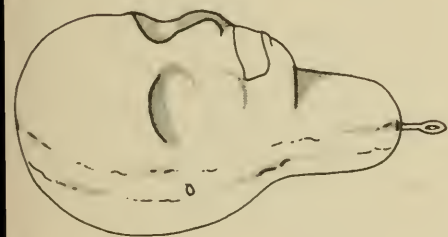
Then separate the halves, remove the model, and allow the plaster to harden thoroughly.

Another very satisfactory way of forming the casts is to obtain a small box large enough to hold the modeled head, and yet allow about one-half inch margin on all sides. Fill the box about half full of the wet plaster of Paris and insert the greased head model into the mixture so that only half the head protrudes. Allow the plaster to dry and then rub the exposed surface thoroughly with a thick coat of grease. On this pour more wet plaster, entirely covering the cast. When this upper layer has hardened, separate the two halves and remove the model head. Instead of greasing the exposed surface of plaster of Paris before the second half is poured in, it is also satisfactory to place on this surface several layers of ordinary waxed paper. This often permits the two halves of the cast to be separated more readily than does the greased surface.

LINING THE CAST

Into the completed cast may be placed either the plastic wood or the papier-mâché, depending on the type of head which you have decided to employ. When plastic wood is to be used, purchase a good grade of this material, since the cheaper products often warp and shrink to such a degree that they are a total waste. Line the two halves of the cast with plastic wood about one-fourth of an inch thick and allow this composition material to dry thoroughly. It will shrink slightly from the sides of the cast and will fall easily from the mold. If the plastic wood has not perfectly reproduced the features, it is a simple matter to fill any tiny cracks or build out the

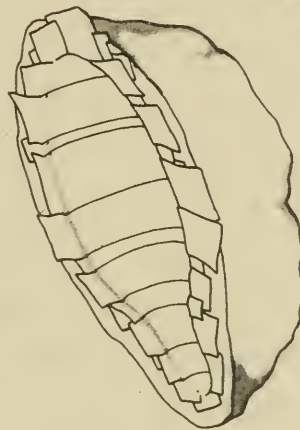
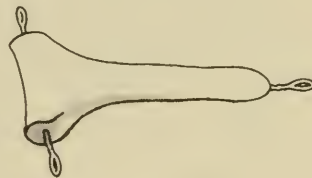
A WIRE ATTACHMENT FOR THE HEAD STRINGS, AND A WOODEN CYLINDER WITH SCREW-EYE FOR JOINING THE HEAD TO THE BODY, ARE PREPARED. THE PLASTIC WOOD HALVES ARE FITTED TOGETHER, WITH THE PREPARED ATTACHMENTS INSIDE. THE TWO HALVES ARE SEALED WITH PLASTIC WOOD.



FOR PROTECTION THE MODELED HEAD IS COVERED WITH GLUE AND CHEESE-CLOTH.



A WOODEN TRIANGULAR PIECE, EQUIPPED WITH SCREW-EYES, FORMS A FOUNDATION FOR THE WAX HEAD.



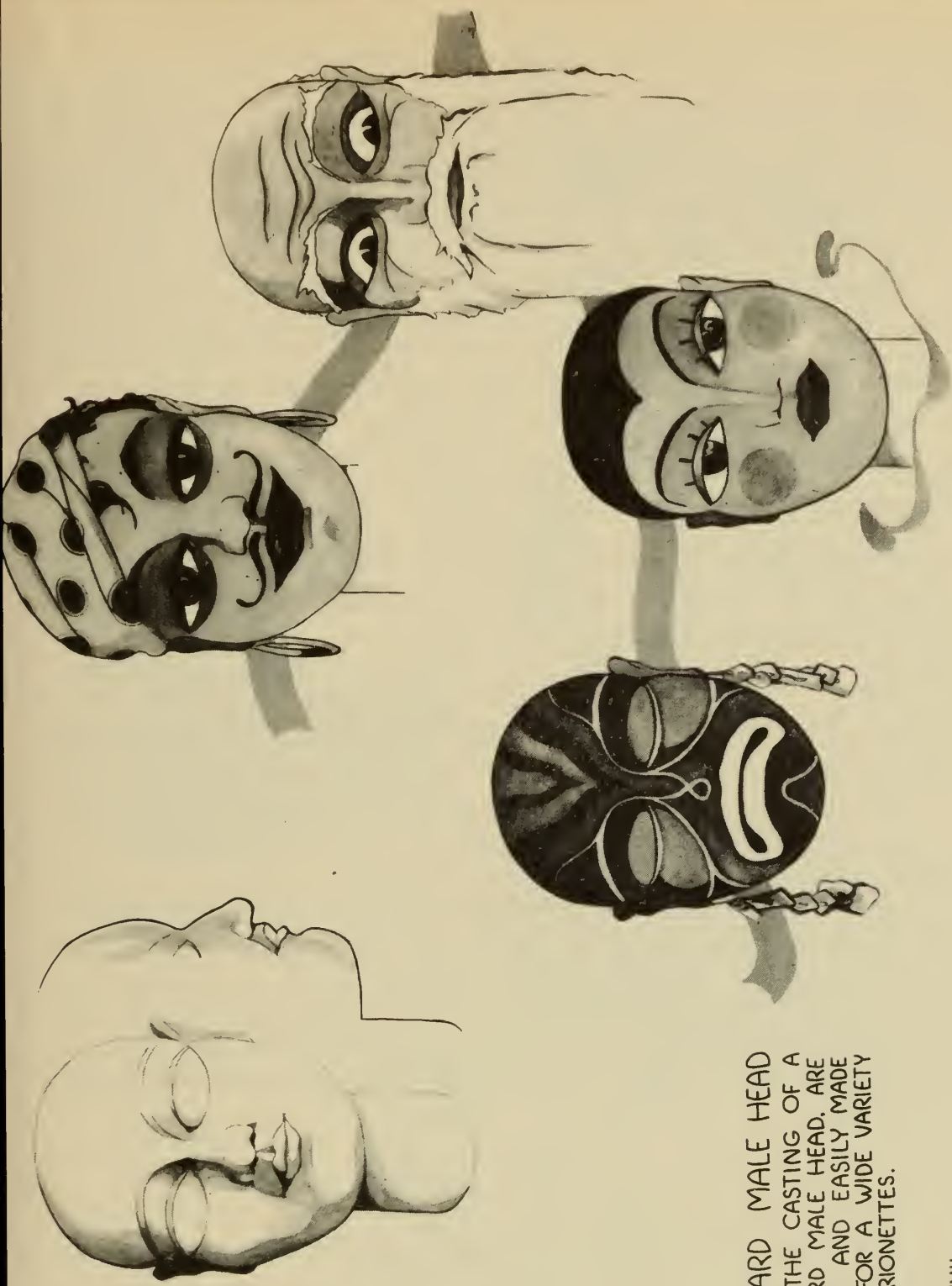
STRIPS OF PAPIER MÂCHÉ ARE LINED INSIDE THE PLASTER CAST, AND ALLOWED TO HARDEN. THE COMPLETED PAPIER MÂCHÉ FORMS ARE THEN TRIMMED AND JOINED.

HEAD CONSTRUCTION
PLATE XVI

MAKING MARIONETTES

nose, cheeks, or chin, with additional plastic wood. When the two halves are completed, pare off the waste material which has jutted beyond the edge of the cast so that the two plastic wood halves fit perfectly together. (With a sharp knife make tiny "V's" at the ears and at the base of the neck. Then form a piece of picture wire so that there are loops at either end, just wide enough apart so that they will fit inside the head and protrude far enough at the ears in order that the head strings may be fastened to the loops. Then carve a small cylinder of wood shaped to fit inside the neck. At the curved end, insert a small screw-eye which will jut through the "V's" at the base of the neck. Having inserted this wire form and this wooden cylinder within the head, place the two halves together and seal them with plastic wood. When the wood which has been used for sealing has hardened, sandpaper the joining to smooth the rough edges which have resulted. The head is then ready to be painted and joined to the body.

If you have decided to use papier-mâché for making your puppet head, mix about two heaping tablespoonfuls of flour with enough water to make a mixture the consistency of thick cream. Add two cups of hot water, and heat the mixture, stirring constantly, permitting it to boil for two minutes. While allowing this mixture to cool sufficiently to permit dipping your fingers into it, cut newspaper into strips about three-fourths of an inch wide and about six inches long. Soak the strips of paper in a pan of water until they are soft and flimsy. Then, taking each strip separately, dip them into the paste mixture and rub the paste thoroughly into the paper. Insert each strip, after it has been thoroughly covered with the paste



STANDARD MALE HEAD
FROM THE CASTING OF A
STANDARD MALE HEAD, ARE
QUICKLY AND EASILY MADE
HEADS FOR A WIDE VARIETY
OF MARIONETTES.

MAKING MARIONETTES

mixture, into the cast, evenly lining the entire interior surface (see Plate XVI). Place the first layer of strips horizontal, the second vertical, etc., until the inside of the cast is lined with five or six paper layers. Be sure to press the papier-mâché firmly into all the depressions of the cast, in order that the features of the face will stand out in clear relief in the finished mask. Allow the papier-mâché to harden thoroughly, and then carefully remove it from the plaster cast. Trim the waste paper from around the paper forms until the two halves fit together perfectly. Again, as with the plastic wood forms, cut "V's" at the ears and the neck base, and insert attachments for stringing and joining the head. When this process is completed, fasten the two halves together with several strips of papier-mâché. Since this type of head is very light, it is often advisable to stuff the mold with rather heavy rags before the two halves are glued together.

Another method of making papier-mâché heads is to place the strips of papier-mâché directly on the wax model, until there are about five or six layers of paper. When the papier-mâché has hardened, the halves are removed and joined as outlined above. However, it will readily be observed that placing the papier-mâché over the wax model thickens and enlarges the facial features and destroys even the simplest delicacy of form.

WAX HEADS

The wax marionette head is made by first carving a triangular-shaped piece of wood and inserting screw-eyes at each of its apexes. About this form, the wax head is modeled, with the

STANDARD FEMALE HEAD
MANY VARIED PUPPET HEADS
CAN BE MADE FROM THE CAST
OF A STANDARD FEMALE HEAD
BY CLEVER FEATURE PAINTING
AND DISTRIBUTION OF FACIAL
LINES.



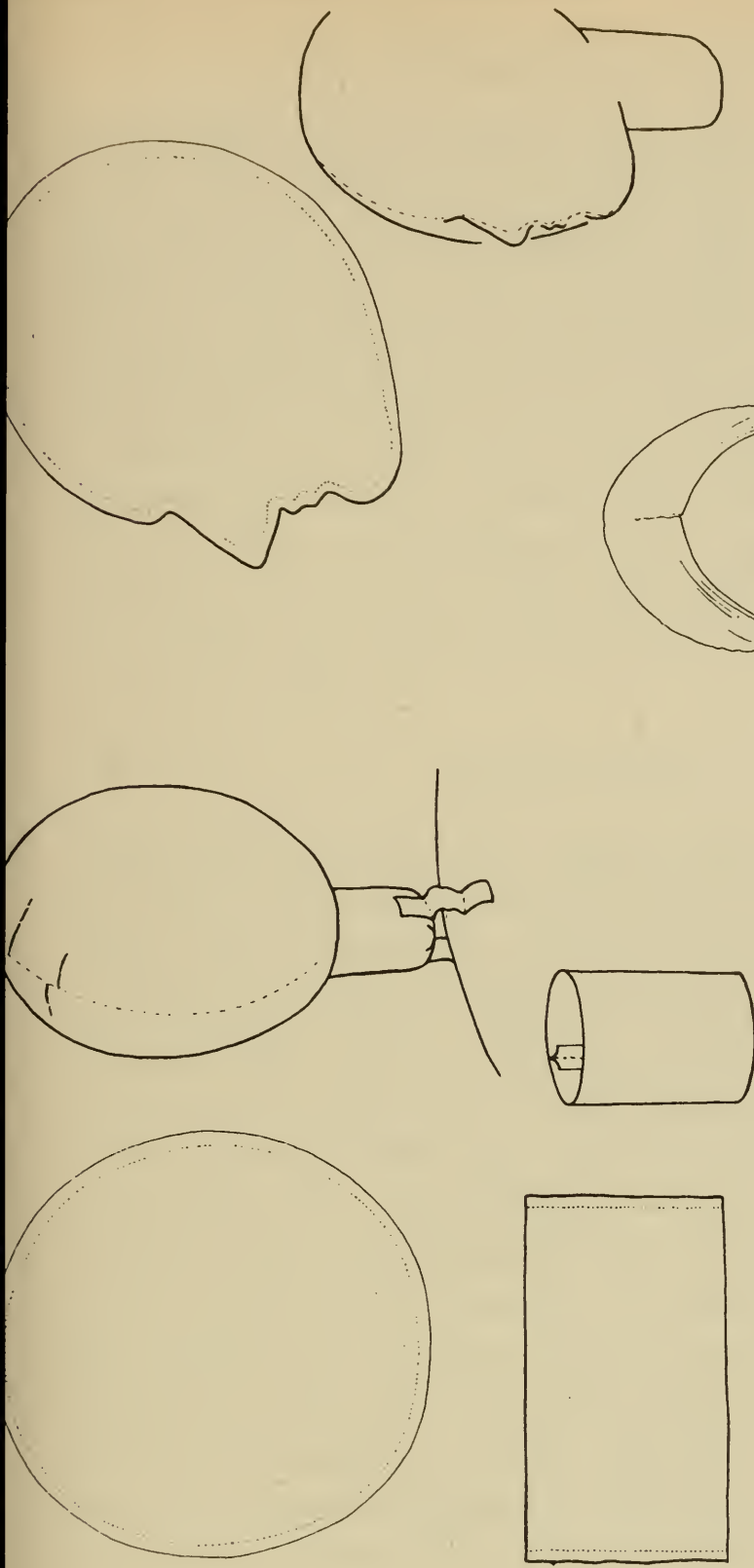
PLATE XVIII

MAKING MARIONETTES

screw-eyes protruding at the ears and at the base of the neck. After the modeled head has hardened, it is daubed with a layer of glue, which may be thinned with a little water if necessary. When this glue coat has been evenly distributed over the front half of the head, a square of damp cheesecloth is pressed firmly and tightly over the wet surface. The cheesecloth stretches and spreads well into the hollows of the face. When the glue has hardened, the same process is repeated on the back of the head, and the waste cheesecloth cut off. This cheesecloth acts as a protective coating to the wax head and affords a surface which may be easily painted. If marionettes receive very careful treatment, it is unnecessary to place this protective coat of cheesecloth over the wax. Instead, the wax itself may be painted with oil paint.

The procedure of continually modeling and casting heads for each puppet, no matter how small his part in the performance may be, grows rather tedious and requires considerable time and material. To avoid the constant repetition of this process, it is possible to make a standard model of a puppet head which may effectively be used for various characters (see Plates XVII and XVIII). This model is cast and the cast ready for use whenever a rather unimportant puppet head is needed. Through painting, heads cast from the same model will take widely different character and will suit a great number of different parts. For variety, it is possible to add plastic wood to the heads before painting, in order to lengthen the nose, fatten the cheeks, or in some other manner give diversity to the basic head form.

A few professional puppeteers have equipped their mario-

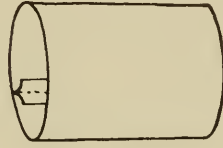
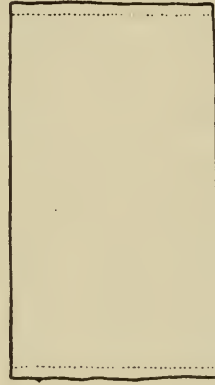
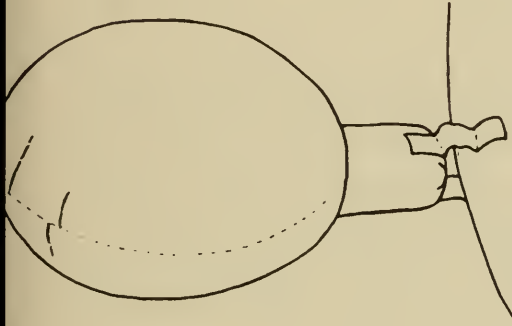
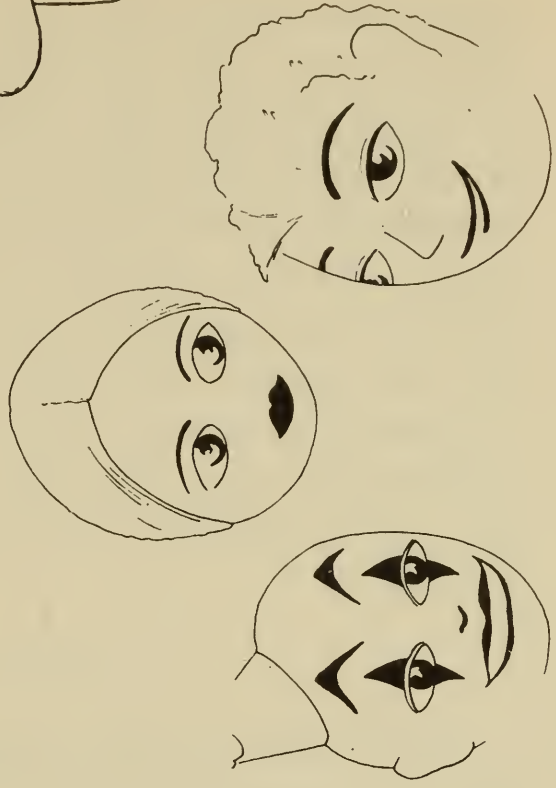


CLOTH HEADS PLATE XIX

THE MUSLIN PATTERN IS CUT, SEWED, AND FILLED WITH KAPOK. A STRIP OF MUSLIN IS SEWED TO FORM THE CYLINDER OF THE NECK.

CLOTH HEADS SEWED IN PROFILE GIVE MORE CHARACTER TO THE FACE

LARGE FEATURES ARE PAINTED OR DRAWN ON THE FACE SURFACE. YARN HAIR SEWED TO THE SCALP; AND SMALL PATCHES OF CLOTH ADDED FOR THE NOSE AND EARS.



MAKING MARIONETTES

nettes with moving jaws and eyes, but it is obvious that unless the figures are of considerable size, these details will not be noticeable and will only afford more difficult puppet manipulation. Such mechanics are surely not advisable for small marionettes. To accomplish this trick, the hollow head of papier-mâché is completed and the eye sockets and lower lip and jaw removed. In their place is inserted a piece of mechanism very similar to that found inside a child's "sleeping" doll. The lower jaw and eyes, in one weighted piece, pivot on a wire protruding through the cheeks. Some experimentation will allow you to determine the simplicity, if not great efficacy, of this device.

CLOTH HEADS

Cloth heads are simple to make. They depend almost entirely upon their painting for their effectiveness, and therefore can never achieve the strength and power of modeled heads. Again the pattern is cut from muslin and stuffed with kapok, squeezed and patted into a suitable egg shape. A simple strip of muslin is seamed into cylindrical form for the neck, and sewed to the head at the small end of the egg shape (see Plate XIX). It is easy to attach yarn hair to cloth heads—and in some cases to embroider features on the face before the head is stuffed. However, a more satisfactory method is to first stuff the head and then paint or draw the features—exaggeratedly large—with tempera, oil, or water color paints, or with pastels or crayons.

Although you are probably anxious to paint the face to see the final effect, it is advisable to forego doing so until you have completed the body for your marionette. Then the parts

RIGHT FACE

of the figure will all be ready for painting, and by mixing the proper flesh tint only once, you will be able to paint arms, legs, face, and chest—and you will be sure that the skin tones, always difficult to duplicate, will match. All limbs will then not only be in proportion to each other, but will also correspond in skin coloring.

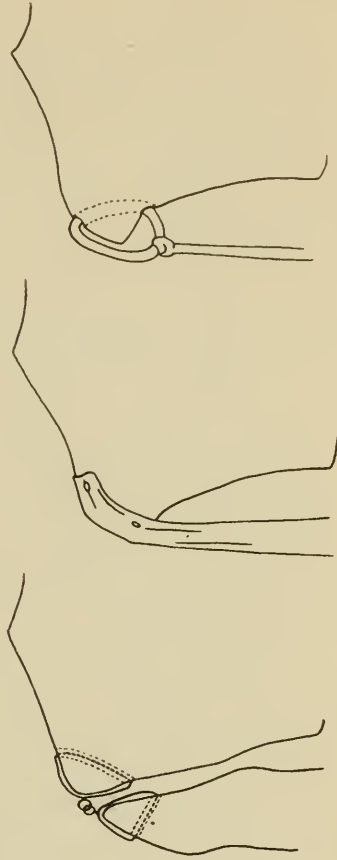
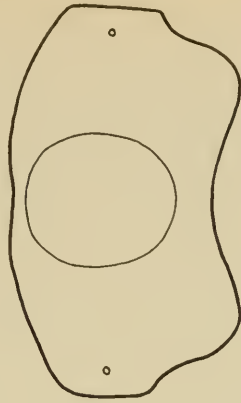
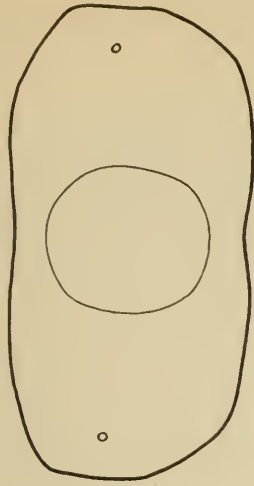
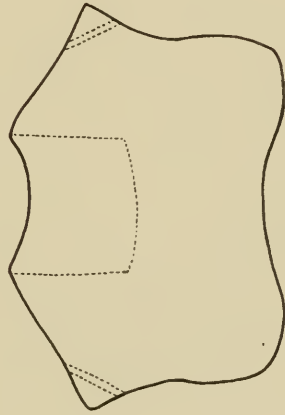
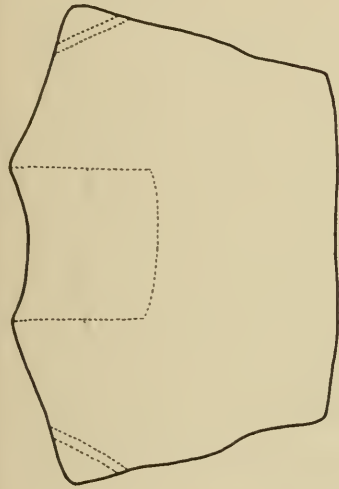


Chapter Five

BODY AND ALL

THE BODY of the marionette almost always is entirely covered by the costume, and therefore the body is usually an unsightly affair apparently devoid of significant form. And yet, although roughly constructed, the puppet body is extremely important and can greatly influence the character which the completed figure will suggest. The draped body of an old man will be far different in line from that of the vigorous active hero. An old man's drooped carriage—made possible by the stringing and construction of his body—will suggest agedness much more quickly than the lines deeply engraved in his forehead. As one works with puppets he realizes more and more how vitally important each feature of the marionette is to an effective whole. To slight the construction of the arms or the head or the body is to weaken the entire character. And so, even into the construction of the body which seems a limp muslin sack, must go considerable care and thought if the finished figure is to be a complete success.

In studying the history of the marionette one is surprised to discover that the Chinese employed corncobs as bodies. This stiff medium seems directly in contrast to the flexible sacks of modern puppets. Experience has shown that a flexible body aids very materially in endowing marionettes with the



SHOULDERS
 WITH THE HUMAN CHEST AS MODEL,
 THE PUPPET CHEST IS CARVED FROM A
 SINGLE BLOCK OF WOOD. A DEEP HOLE
 IS DRILLED FOR THE INSERTION OF THE NECK.
 THE TYPE OF ARM JOINING AT THE
 SHOULDER DEPENDS UPON THE TYPE OF
 UPPER ARM EMPLOYED.

PLATE XX

MAKING MARIONETTES

necessary illusion of possessing life. Invariably present-day marionette bodies are partially hollow, depending upon the fullness of the costume to give breadth and the appearance of weight.

WOODEN BODIES

The body, then, is little more than a muslin sack with wooden shoulders and hips. Determine the measurements of the width and breadth of the chest and shoulders from the working drawing. Then trace the chest or shoulder silhouette or contour to, approximately, the breasts, on a block of wood, and carve the chest rather roughly, drilling a hole slightly larger than the diameter of the neck for inserting the neck (see Plate XX). If the upper arms of your marionette are of unstuffed cloth, the shoulder piece should extend the full width of the chest and arms. If, however, the upper arms are of wood or of stuffed cloth, the shoulder piece needs only be the width of the chest to the arm sockets; the upper arms will furnish the additional width. The hips are nothing more than a block of wood (see Plate XXI). Sew a piece of muslin of proper length into cylindrical form, tacking one end of the cylinder to the base of the shoulder and the other to the wooden hip piece. Take a seam about halfway between the base of the shoulder piece and the top of the hip bar. Leave this seamed-in portion at the center of the body absolutely hollow to permit the marionette to bend in natural fashion. Then fill with kapok the chest portion below the wood, through the neck hole or seam. The body is then complete, ready for the attachment of arms, legs, and head.

BODY AND ALL

You will readily discover what an opportunity there is for variety in even this simple type of body. The chest may be deep, giving a youthful, vigorous effect, or it may be sunken and hollow, for witches and old characters. Paunches may be carefully stuffed in sections (permitting the figure to bend, although no more gracefully than an extremely obese person bends) and tacked loosely to form a panel hanging from the chest.

Very much in the same category as the rolling eyes and moving lower jaw, are the heaving chests which puppets may possess. This simple trick is accomplished by forming a papier-mâché shell of the front of a chest. If the figure is to be dressed with bare shoulders and chest, this separate papier-mâché shell should extend to the top of the shoulders, where it may be jointed to the wooden shoulder by strips of adhesive tape at each side of the neck. The base of this papier-mâché chest is, of course, covered by the gown or robe of the figure. A string enables the operator to raise and lower this chest, offering a clever effect when the figure sings or pants from intense exhaustion. Such a device belongs, of course, in the realm of "tricks" for puppets.

ALL TOGETHER

Puppet arms with cloth upper limbs may be attached to the shoulders simply by bradding the apex of the muslin strip well onto the shoulder. Such a joining will allow the arm to bend in natural rotary motion, and the arm will indeed seem to move from the shoulder rather than from the middle of the chest as would the arm if it were nailed low down on the

MAKING MARIONETTES

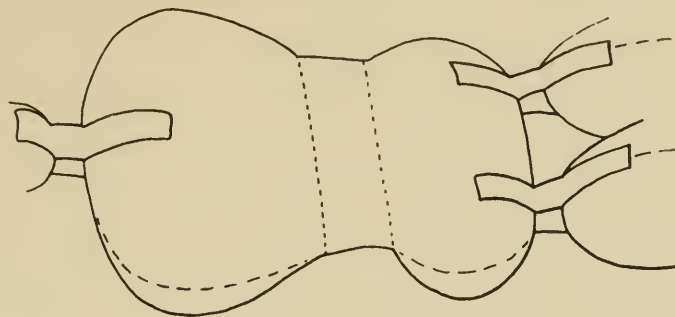
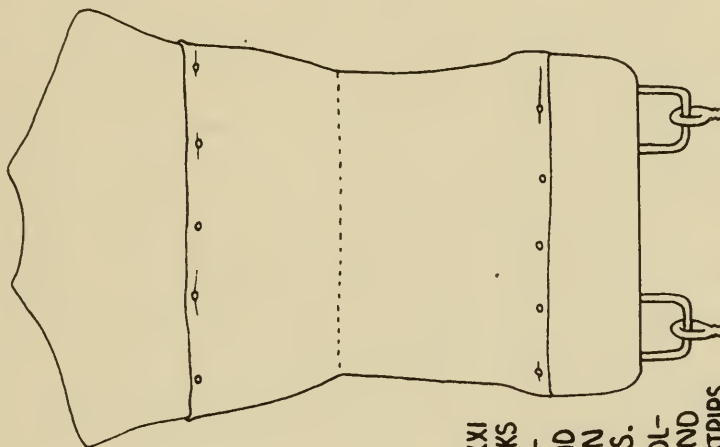
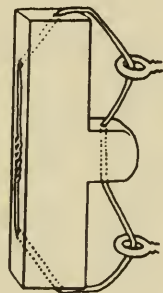
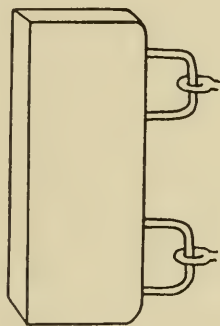
shoulder piece. Wooden upper arms may be attached by a simple wire joining which, too, allows the entire arm free and natural movement. If the arm is only a piece of string or cord, a small hole may be drilled obliquely in the shoulder, and the string looped through this opening.

To attach the head, a nail not quite as long as the breadth of the chest is driven into the back of the chest and through the neck hole. Before the nail pierces the front of the chest, the screw-eye at the base of the neck is placed over the nail, which is then driven in place. The head should wobble loosely, and yet set deeply enough into the chest hole to make a rather inconspicuous joining.

When the puppet has wooden upper legs, screw-eyes are inserted at the knobby ends of the thighs. These screw-eyes are then hung on staples and the staples driven into the wooden hip block. If the upper legs are of cloth, they are of course merely bradded or tacked to the hip block.

CLOTH BODIES

The cloth body, also, is hollow to permit the puppet to bend naturally. The body pattern is cut from muslin and sewed, with a seamed-off portion in the center which is not stuffed (see Plate XXI). The remainder of the body is filled with kapok, and the body is then complete, ready for the attachment of the arms, legs, and head. The limbs are fastened to the body by means of narrow muslin strips which permit free action. The base of the neck cylinder is sewed to



HIPS AND BODIES PLATE XXI
 HIPS ARE MERELY WOODEN BLOCKS
 WITH LEGS DANGLING FROM STA-
 PLES OR WIRES. SHOULDERS AND
 HIPS ARE JOINED BY MUSLIN
 SACKS WITH HOLLOW CENTERS.
 CLOTH BODIES, ALSO, HAVE HOL-
 LOW CENTERS. ARMS, LEGS, AND
 HEADS ARE JOINED BY MUSLIN STRIPS.

MAKING MARIONETTES

the shoulders, with the neck left hollow so that the head may turn and nod easily.

Your marionette figure should now be a ridiculously limp affair, with arms and legs dangling loosely, head wobbling feebly on the shoulders, and body unable to support the weight of shoulders and head. This absurd figure is now depending on the strings to pull him into shape and hold him erect and ready to respond to the wishes of the puppet operator.



Chapter Six

PUPPET MAKEUP

HAVE you ever had the experience of watching a theatrical performance in which the characters seemed strikingly real and natural? And then have the cast stepped forward beyond the intense glare of the stage lights to take their bows? Or have you been fortunate enough to visit backstage, meeting actors before they changed costume? If you have had either of these experiences, you know the amazement with which you looked at the heavy makeup which seemed almost plastered on the players' faces. It was almost impossible to believe that these weirdly painted and powdered faces were the very ones which had seemed so convincing and natural when illuminated by the glaring stage lights.

Proper makeup, so necessary to a convincing legitimate production under stage lights, is equally important in the marionette performance. The puppet should be just as startlingly painted as the actor when viewed under ordinary light. The puppeteer must experiment with the effect of his puppets' paint under brilliant lights, very much as the makeup artist tests and tries various line, color, and shadow treatments on the actors under the exact lights which will be used in the finished performance.

The tools of the makeup artist are the sticks of grease paint,

MAKING MARIONETTES

the liners, rouges and lipsticks, stubs, and powders; the tools of the puppeteer are only the paint medium and brushes. The medium used for painting marionettes depends somewhat upon the effect the completed puppet is to create. Oil paints are convenient and simple to use, inasmuch as the colors are easily blended, affording smooth shading as well as brilliancy of color. The disadvantage of oil paints is that they often give an undesirable shininess. Tempera or showcard colors, although they do not give the brilliancy of oil paints, dry with a dull finish. Watercolors, because of their transparency, are seldom suitable for wooden, composition, or wax heads. Watercolors, however, are suitable for use on cloth puppet heads provided the paints are sufficiently concentrated on the brush to prevent their spreading through the fibers of the cloth and giving a blurred effect on the outlines of the features. Crayons and pastels may be used for cloth puppets. And so the puppeteer has a rather wide range of mediums from which to choose. Among them is one which he will probably wish to use almost exclusively in the coloring of his figures.

If you have had any experience in mixing paints, you will realize that only a few basic colors are necessary for the creation of many intermediary colors. That is, from blue and yellow may be made many greens ranging from blue-green through yellow-green. Similarly, many oranges will be produced from red and yellow, and purples from red and blue. Therefore it is really necessary to purchase tubes or jars of paint in only the primary colors—red, yellow, and blue—and black and white. To lighten a color, white may be added; to darken it, black. Raw colors taken directly from the tubes

PUPPET MAKEUP

or jars may be dulled slightly by adding a touch of the complementary color: a touch of red added to green will dull the green; a touch of orange added to blue will dull the blue, etc. The thorough understanding of the mixing of color, however, while helpful to the puppeteer, is certainly not imperative.

After you have selected a medium, paint a flesh color on the limbs and body wherever they will be exposed by the costume. Paint the head and neck, too, with this flesh tint in order that the entire figure will be of uniform color. The flesh tint should not be an anemic blend of pink and white, but should have sufficient yellow and brown to give life and glow to the figure. Naturally flesh tints will not be the same for all puppets: a sunburned effect may be created by adding yellow and reddish-brown to the ordinary flesh tone; a pallidness, by adding a little blue; a floridness, by adding carmen. Negro flesh tints should not always be the minstrel-show black, but rather warm browns and yellows added to the flesh tone. American Indian skin tones may be mixed by adding red, brown, and yellow to the flesh base. By experimenting with various colors and placing them under the intense lights of your puppet stage, you will discover the proper flesh shade for whatever puppet you are constructing. Even in blending a flesh tone, the consideration should not be how the color looks in ordinary light, but rather, how it appears under the colored stage lights.

LIGHT AND SHADOW

When the makeup artist has covered the face of the actor with the base tone, he next determines where the facial shadows

MAKING MARIONETTES

should be, and proceeds to rub in darker colors to create these shadows. So you, as puppeteer, having painted the face of your puppet, should shadow the features to express clearly the character of the puppet. A color for painting in shadows is mixed by adding blue, purple, or brown to the flesh tone which has been used. If the puppet is to be an old man, strong shadows will be painted into the eye-sockets and about the wrinkles of his face. The temples may be shaded to show the flesh drawn tightly over the skull. The ridge of the nose may be made prominent by shading both sides of the nose. Bluish or purplish shadows under the cheek bones will make the cheeks seem sunken and the bones prominent. Lines of the face may be made very dark at the base of the wrinkles. To further accentuate these wrinkles, a lighter color, or highlight, may be placed just above the wrinkle. Such shading and lines will not be given to the puppets which are to appear young and zestful. A certain feeling of animation may be given to such characters by making the foreheads slightly lighter than the other parts of the faces. The prominence of the forehead may be accentuated by darkening under the brows to give esthetic soulfulness and intellect.

After you have spotted the shadows on the face and have boldly accented the wrinkles, carefully paint the features themselves. Paint the eye exaggeratedly large and brilliant in color. The iris of the eye is a dark circle inside the lighter pupil. The white of the eye is painted with a slightly dulled white. The outside corner of the eye is a little higher than the inside corner, and the brow is about half an eye's length above the eye. When the eye is painted, add a touch of white in the iris,

PUPPET MAKEUP

and a touch of carmen in the inner corner to give life and luster. The nostrils of the more delicate female marionettes may be outlined lightly in red, while the nostrils of the ogre may be heavily outlined in brown or black and painted to give the effect of large, coarse hollows. Between these two extremes are any number of variations. Since the mouth expresses character, it should be carefully painted—large thick lips to express coarseness and vulgarity; tight, narrow lips to express hardness and miserliness. Expression, although it is modeled into the face, should be accentuated by the painting of the features—eyes wide open in terror; closed in grief or melancholy; or in natural position to show quiet and repose.

When the face is painted, complete with flesh tones, shadows, and features, place the figure under a strong light and scrutinize it from a distance of fifteen or twenty feet. Study the whole effect to see what changes can be made to make the marionette stronger and more vigorous and, above all, expressive of the character itself. Remember that the puppet hero must be recognized as the hero as soon as he steps on the stage, just as the villain must be at once identifiable as the character to be despised.

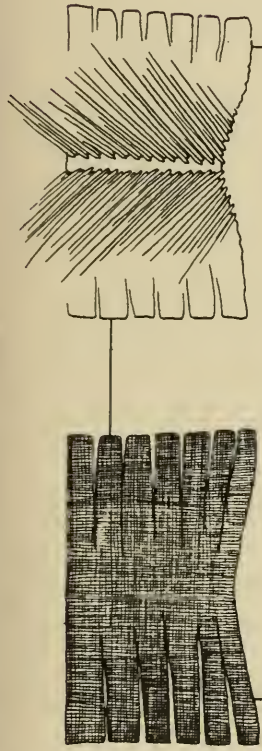
Shadows may also be painted on the hands and feet. The declivities between the bones of old people's hands may be shaded and veins traced in blue or purple. A touch of shellac may be added to each finger tip to give the glow of the fingernails.

MAKING MARIONETTES

BARBER! BARBER!

After completing the painting of your puppet, hair, beards, and mustaches may be added. Of course the hair is often modeled in plastic fashion as part of the head, and in that case is painted in whatever color is desired. Blue added to black gives a glossy hair color. Blond hair should not be painted simply a straw yellow color unless a special effect is desired. For the ordinary blond puppet, a brown should be added to the yellow color. Red or auburn hair may be effected by adding brown, or yellow and brown, to red.

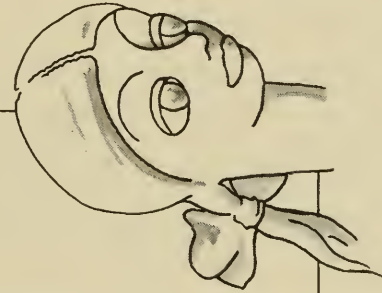
Hair added to wooden, composition, or wax heads may be of crepe hair, wool, silk, cheesecloth, or raffia (see Plate XXII). Crepe hair may be purchased in inexpensive rope-like braids from any theatrical supply store. These braids, which may be obtained in the various desirable shades, should be unraveled as needed, combed out, and dampened slightly to eliminate the excessive waviness. Glue should then be applied to the scalp, chin, or upper lip, and the crepe hair generously fastened on. When the glue has dried, the puppet should be given a hair-cut, and the coiffure arranged in whatever manner desired. Such hair gives a softness which is most effective under the lights. Silk, woolen, or raffia hair may be applied by first sewing the selected medium to a form cut from buckram. The resulting wigs, beards, or mustaches may then be glued to the heads of the marionettes, and the hair shaped or styled to fit the puppet. Such hair, arranged in exaggerated fashion, is suggested for comic characters. If the silk or woolen hair seems too coarse even under the lights, the silk or yarn may be rav-



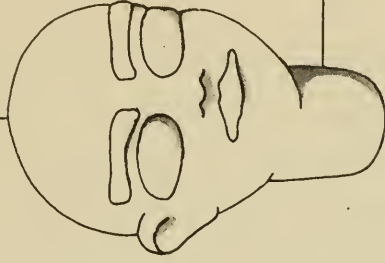
PLASTIC, MODELED
HAIR.



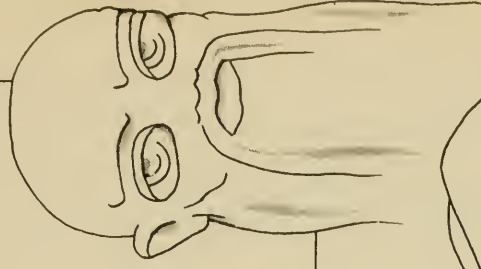
GLUED, CHEESECLOTH
WHISKERS AND BROWS.



COTTON HAIR
AND BEARD.



YARN MOUSTACHE.



COTTON HAIR
AND BEARD.



YARN MOUSTACHE.

MAKING MARIONETTES

eled after the hair has been fastened to the head. To make hair of cheesecloth, the cloth is soaked in a thick glue and water mixture, crumpled and tufted, and fastened to the head. After the cheesecloth has dried, it may be clipped. Such hair gives a pert, unique effect for the beards and eyebrows of gnomes and goblins.

Hair for cloth puppets may be simply painted on the cloth head form, although it is far more satisfactory to sew yarn or silk floss hair onto especially the female figures. Since the heads are of cloth, the hair may be sewed directly onto them, rather than onto the buckram form which is necessary with wood or composition heads. For male puppets the hair should be clipped rather short, and continued well down the back of the head; otherwise the effect is apt to be similar to that of the country boy with only a wild patch of hair on the top of his head, with the back and sides clipped close. For puppets with cloth heads, hair, as well as features, should be kept as simple as possible.

Undoubtedly you have approached the painting of your first marionette with some hesitancy and fear of overemphasis, being accustomed more to the delicacy of the painting of a child's china doll than to the bold use of line and color by the makeup artist. However, after you have seen your puppet in action on a lighted stage, and have realized that it is far more important that the figure be an effective character when viewed by the audience, than a beautiful doll held in the puppeteer's hand, you will soon work more freely, and will acquire the boldness which is required for the most successful painting of marionette figures.

Chapter Seven

CLOTHES AND THE PUPPET

COSTUMING the marionette is a slightly different problem from that of dressing the living stage actor or actress. For the costume of the marionette is as much a part of the figure itself as are the hands, arms, and body. When the designer creates a costume for the living actor, he sketches it on some tall, thin creature; the costume could be worn by any number of actresses. But with the marionette, the costume is designed for one puppet alone—the drawing of the costume is merely a part of the drawing of the figure itself. The costume, hands, feet, and head together form the creature which will be seen by the audience, and it is within the puppeteer's power to create the entire figure. The garb of one marionette would not fit another puppet, since the puppet himself has been planned to operate successfully within the costume. That is, if the puppet costume has been designed with low neck exposing the chest and shoulders, the puppet body and arm joinings will be very different from those of a puppet with a costume covering even the neck joining. The puppet is not considered separate from his costume, nor, conversely, is the costume considered separate from the puppet.

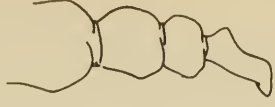
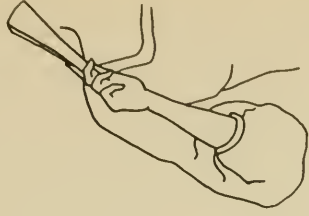
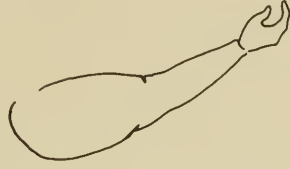
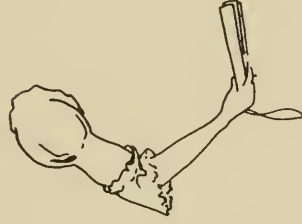
The only important limitation placed on marionette costumes is that they allow free movement of the important joints

MAKING MARIONETTES

—that they allow that particular marionette to easily enact the gestures required by the part. But this one limitation is more widespread in its influence than one would at first suspect. For when proper joint operation is a consideration, the costume must not only be designed to be loose over the joints, but also must be made from material which is flexible and yet creates the desired illusion (see Plate XXIII).

DRESS PARADE

The costumes for marionettes may be classified as historical, modern, and imaginative. The first group often requires careful research and planning if the finished production is to be convincing. If the puppet play is set in Greek or Roman times, it is important that the significant characteristics of the fashions of that period be discovered. If it is found that dress consisted of plain draperies falling from the shoulders and bloused at the waist, with white or natural fabric shades predominating as the colors regularly worn, it is a simple matter for the puppeteer to design numerous varied costumes conforming both to these specifications and to the limitations governing marionette costuming. Similarly, if a play is set in Elizabethan England, the puppeteer will soon discover that skirts were full and hooped, sleeves were full, and materials used were silks and velvets in rich and brilliant colors. Costumes can then easily be designed which will permit the puppet to move freely, and will, in themselves, at once acquaint the audience with the setting of the play. More than adequate information regarding historical costume can be obtained at the public library. Often



COSTUME DETAILS

PLATE XXIII

THE NECK JOINING MAY BE COVERED BY A HIGH COLLAR, SHOULDER ARMOR, A RUFF, OR A SCARF. THE TOPS OF THE SHOULDERS MAY BE PART OF THE CHEST, WITH ARM JOININGS UNDER THE CAPELET OF THE COLLAR. ARMS CAN BE SLEEVED IN NUMEROUS WAYS, BUT ATTENTION SHOULD ALWAYS BE GIVEN TO THE LOOSENESS OF THE SLEEVE OVER THE JOINTS. TROUSERS SHOULD BE LOOSE OVER THE KNEES TO PERMIT EASY LEG MOVEMENT.

MAKING MARIONETTES

one picture, of, for instance, the court of Queen Elizabeth, will suggest costumes for an entire play.

If you are entering puppeteering either as a profession or hobby, it would be wise to collect magazine and newspaper clippings of historical costumes. These clippings could be arranged chronologically according to the various countries. Also clippings of caricatures and personages, as well as stage sets and simple landscapes, would be of great value to the serious puppeteer. Such a collection would be very similar to the artists' "morgues"—accumulations of articles, scenes, costumes, people, etc., which the artists may some day be called upon to draw or incorporate in an illustration.

Modern costumes require no research unless the puppet to be dressed is a character with whom one does not come in contact in everyday life. The marionette of a famous political personage or movie star should be costumed exactly in that person's most typical fashion. Similarly, the costuming of modern circus characters—lion tamers, trapeze performers, etc.—requires a certain knowledge of the type of garb these people wear, since the public has come to expect lion tamers to dress in military boots and jackets elaborately trimmed with braid, and trapeze performers to dress in pastel-colored tights. The puppet should usually bow to such concepts, inasmuch as it will aid the audience in immediately identifying his character.

The imaginative costume offers the puppeteer an opportunity for the indulgence of his fancy. No one has seen an ogre or a fairy or a gnome, so no one can say exactly how such characters should be dressed. The puppeteer is as much an authority in such matters as is anyone else.

CLOTHES AND THE PUPPET

RAGS TO RICHES

The type of material selected for puppet costumes should be light and flexible. Heavy velvets or damasks would not be suitable since they would fall in thick bulky folds, heavy on the tiny figures and interfering with the movements of the puppets. Such fabrics would obviously seem disproportionate to the puppets themselves. Too, the materials which look best in ordinary daylight are not always best under the lights. Georgette and chiffon fall gracefully and lightly, and are especially adaptable to puppet costumes, and silks and rayons are effective on the stage. Scraps of material which are already on hand may be touched up with watercolor or crayon to produce the desired color or effect.

If colored lights are to be used in the production, it is well to try the colored materials under the lights before making the costumes. It is surprising to discover that under a blue light, red will turn purplish; green, blackish; and yellow, brownish. Or that under a red light, yellow and purple become reddish, and green and blue, blackish. Or that under the ordinary amber light, yellow becomes intensified, blue seems blackish, and green turns yellow-green.

Besides the effect of lights on colors, the qualities which we attribute to various colors should be taken into consideration. Red, orange, and yellow are warm colors which we have come to regard as cheerful colors. Blue, green, and purple are cool colors which suggest depression and terror. The use of color will, in itself, express to the audience the character or mood of the marionette. It is also possible, especially in a play which

MAKING MARIONETTES

is confusing or complicated in its plot, to dress the characters so that they will be easily identified. In such a play as "Romeo and Juliet," in which the two houses, with their followers, are at conflict, it is simpler for the audience if the costumes of the members and followers of one house are dressed, say, in blue and colors neighboring blue, while those members and followers of the other house are dressed in reds and oranges, and their neighboring colors. Such a means of identifying characters, while very elemental, is used even on the professional living stage.

Too, colors which contrast with or stand off from the scenery should be selected for the costumes. If a blue cyclorama is used, costumes may well be in bright yellows, oranges, or reds. Or if a simple black backdrop is employed, costumes can be in any pastel shades, or bright yellows, reds, and blues.

In selecting patterned materials for costumes, care should be taken that the designs are large enough to be seen and yet not large enough to dwarf the puppets and destroy the illusion created by keeping figures, scenery, and properties in proportion.

Costumes for marionettes are sewed directly onto the puppets since there is no occasion for the changing of costumes during a performance. It will readily be appreciated that due to the strings which pierce the knees, shoulders, and backs of the garments, it is impossible to remove ordinary puppet costumes. Obviously then, if the same character is to appear in the same production in two entirely different garbs, it is necessary to have two puppets with identical features and limbs, but wearing different costumes. Such changes of garments can and

CLOTHES AND THE PUPPET

should usually be avoided, since they often prove confusing to the audience. It is possible, when a puppet appears constantly throughout a long performance, to vary his costume slightly by throwing a cape over his shoulders, or by fitting a hat on his head. Such capes or hats may easily be constructed so that they may quickly be fastened to the puppet, and so that they will not become caught on, or impair the action of, the strings. With any considerable dress change impossible, the traveling puppet does not require a trunk of costumes; rather, the traveling puppeteer requires a trunk of puppets.



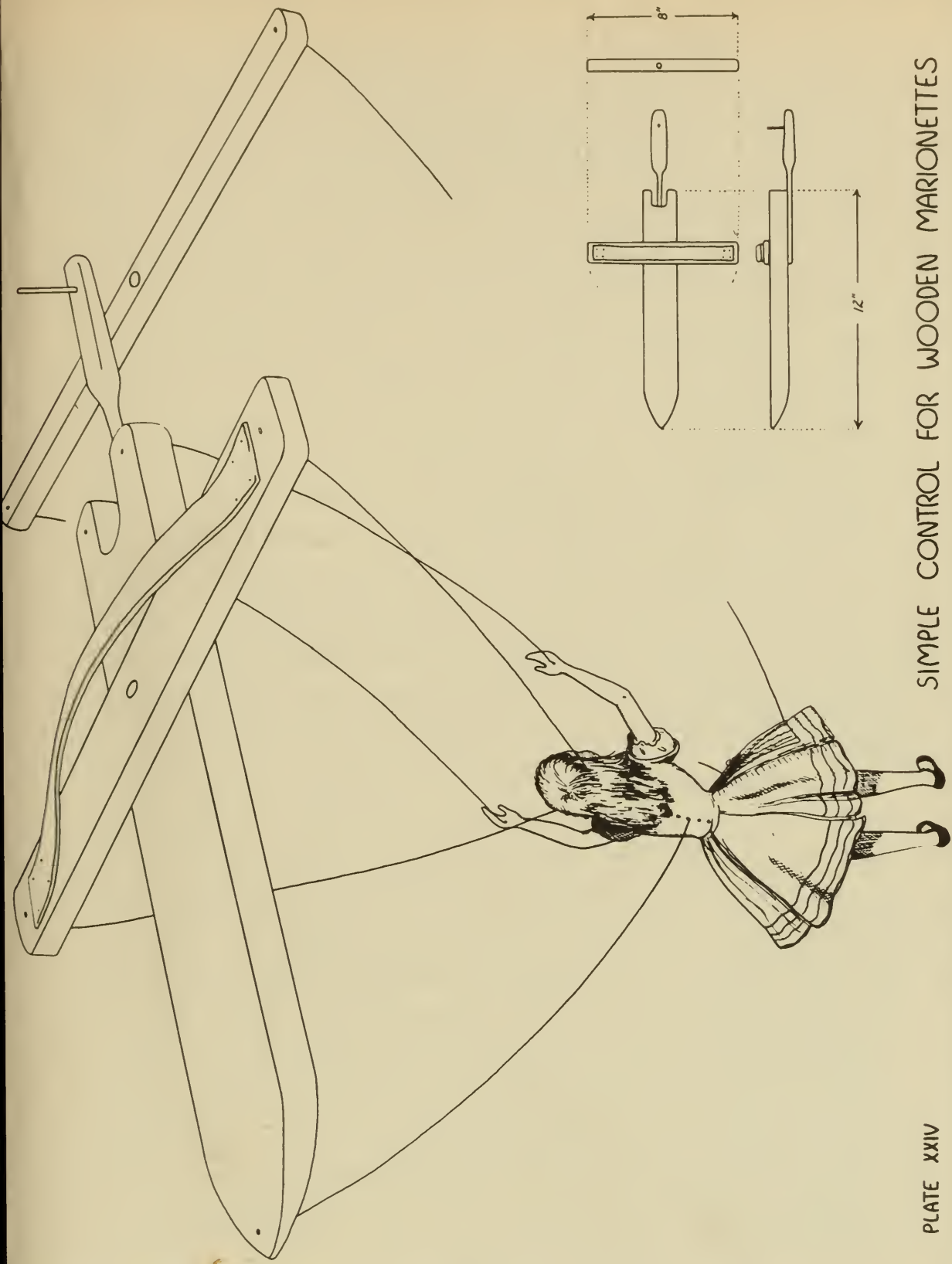
Chapter Eight

UNDER CONTROL

AND NOW, at last, the puppeteer certainly should be afforded an opportunity to thumb his nose at the audience. Surely the controls are one part of the marionette about which the puppeteer should not need to worry, "What will the audience think?" Only too true it is that in constructing the marionette the attention has necessarily been constantly focused on the audience and their reaction to the tiny figures being built. How delightful to model beautifully fragile and delicate faces—but the audience would not appreciate them! Or, being partial to blue, to dress whomever one wishes in that color—but the audience might misinterpret the mood or character of the figure. Now, indeed, the puppeteer is constructing a part of the marionette never seen by the audience, and, in fact, a part which should never be considered by them. Yet in making the audience not even "consider" the controls the puppeteer must construct apparatus which will perfectly manipulate the marionette figures. The audience again demands a measure of attention.

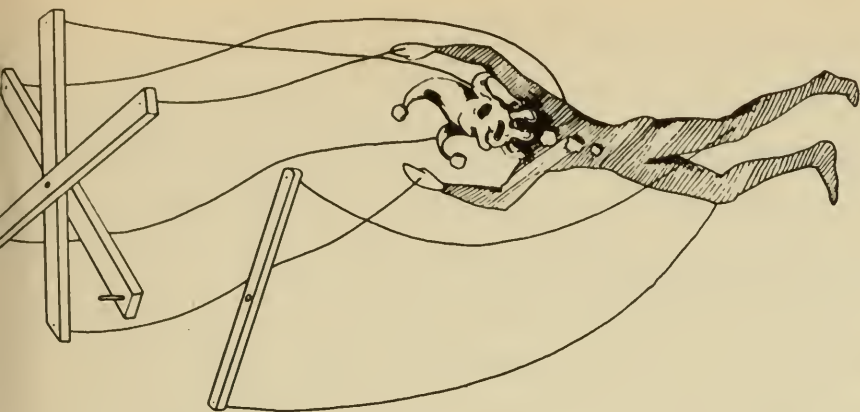
WOODEN MARIONETTE CONTROLS

Controls for wooden marionettes are usually more complex in their construction than are the controls designed for cloth

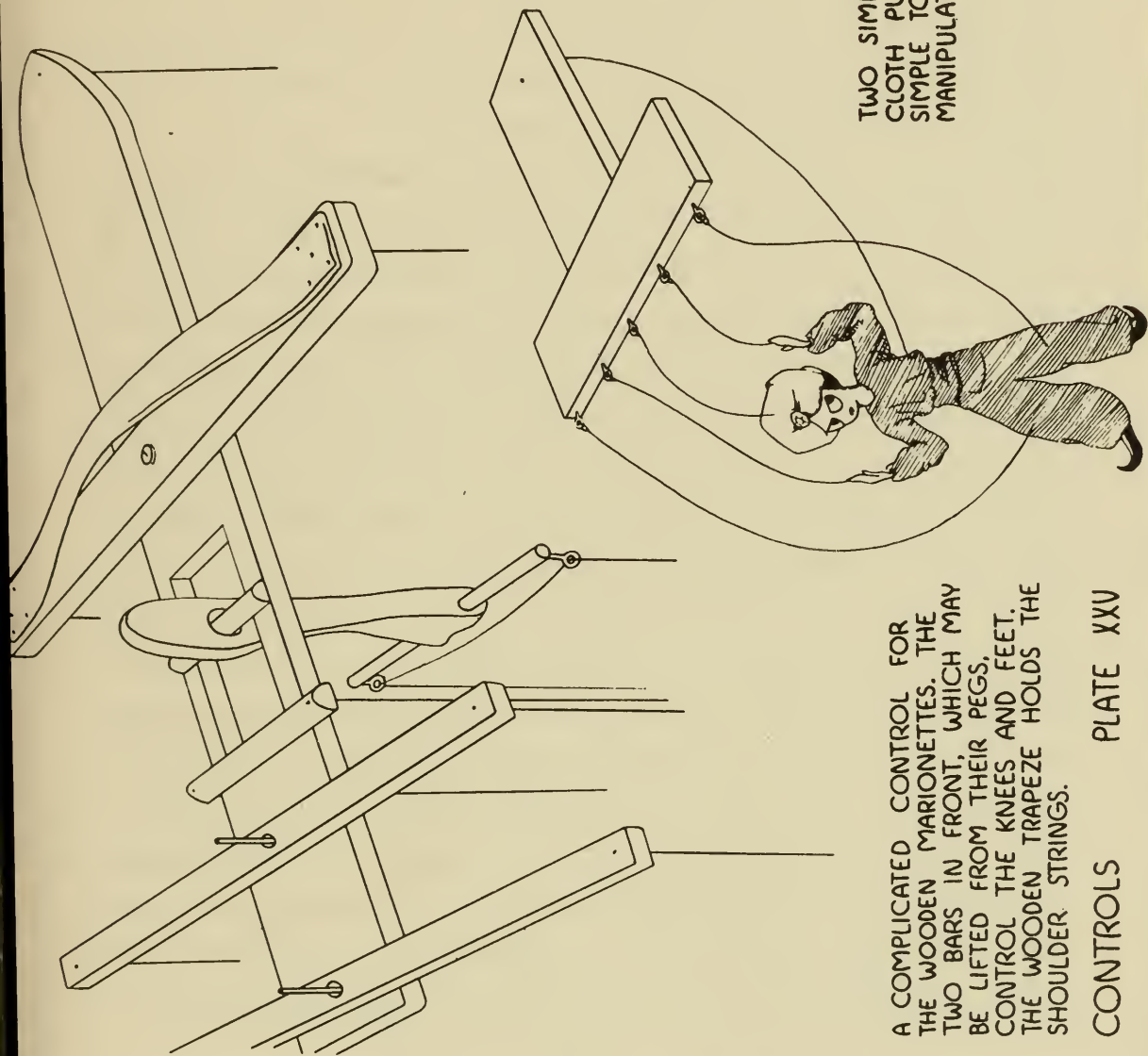


MAKING MARIONETTES

marionettes. The simple control for wooden marionettes (see Plate XXIV) is in two separate pieces—the main control which is held in the left hand of the operator, and the knee control which rests on a peg on the front of the main control, but which may be lifted from the peg by the right hand to operate the legs. The wood used for the controls should be soft and light. For an eighteen-inch puppet, or one of neighboring size, the main bar of the control is about eight inches long. Sharpen the end of this bar to a rounded point and drill a hole in the end for the attachment of the back string. Carve the other end of this piece with two projecting ends, to which the hand strings will be attached. Then drill a hole in the center of the smaller bar (about six inches long) and screw this bar onto the main bar about six inches from the curved end. Simply insert the screw through the hole which has been drilled in the smaller piece, and then screw it to the main bar, permitting the upper bar to pivot freely. Across this smaller bar tack a leather handle, allowing enough slack to permit the hand to fit moderately snugly inside. Leather (in the form of straps) for this purpose may be purchased at any hardware or 10¢ store. Drill small holes at each end of this smaller bar for the attachment of the head strings. Then tack a small carved piece of wood, with wooden peg or nail with filed-off end projecting in an upright position, to the front of, and underneath, the main bar of the control. On this peg which stands perpendicularly in front of the control, will rest the knee control, which is simply a narrow strip of wood about eight inches long with hole drilled in the middle. At either end of this stick drill small holes for the attachment of the knee strings. You have undoubtedly observed



TWO SIMPLE CONTROLS FOR CLOTH PUPPETS. BOTH ARE SIMPLE TO CONSTRUCT AND MANIPULATE.



A COMPLICATED CONTROL FOR THE WOODEN MARIONETTES. THE TWO BARS IN FRONT, WHICH MAY BE LIFTED FROM THEIR PEGS, CONTROL THE KNEES AND FEET. THE WOODEN TRAPEZE HOLDS THE SHOULDER STRINGS.

MAKING MARIONETTES

by this time that this type of control requires a back string, two hand strings, two head strings, and two knee strings. These are really the fundamental strings which are important to every puppet. If complicated leg actions are required of the puppet, two pegs set well apart, instead of only one peg, may be attached to the front of the control, one peg for the knee control and the other for a smaller (six inches in length) foot control. Other devices may be added if the puppet is required to enact a more complicated routine than that permitted by the fundamental control. However, the simple control is satisfactory for the majority of puppets.

A more complicated control for the wooden marionette (see Plate XXV) is that very similar to the simple control described above, but having, in addition to the strings mentioned, shoulder strings which greatly aid the marionette in moving naturally. The shoulder piece is a carved wooden tongue suspended and pivoting from a slot in the main control. This tongue protrudes above the middle of the control so that it may be operated by the hand holding the main control. On the ends of a trapeze bar arrangement, at the bottom of the tongue, which hangs about five inches below the main bar of the control, screw-eyes are inserted, through which one continuous string, attached to both shoulders, passes. With this shoulder arrangement, even when the control is tipped sideways, the marionette will remain erect, for the shoulder strings will slide through the screw-eyes to preserve the balance of the figure. The head strings, rather than affecting the movement of the entire body, as is the tendency with the simpler control, turn the puppet head naturally to either side. The tongue, which may be

UNDER CONTROL

pushed backward or forward by the hand holding the main control, causes the head to nod or drop forward onto the chest.

CLOTH MARIONETTE CONTROLS

Simplicity should be the keynote of controls for cloth marionettes. One of the simplest controls is that consisting of two bars—one about six inches long and two inches wide, and the other about eight inches long and two inches wide—joined in a “T” form, with the longer bar as the top of the “T” (see Plate XXV). To the front of this control are attached either five or six screw-eyes, and to the rear, one. To the screw-eyes at either end are attached the knee strings; to those second from the ends, the hand strings; to the screw-eyes in the center, the head strings. (If only one screw-eye is in the center, the string is attached to the center of the head; if two screw-eyes have been provided, strings are attached to each side of the head.) The back string is attached to the screw-eye in the rear. This type of control is held in the left hand by the six-inch strip, leaving the right hand free to operate the various strings attached to the front of the control.

Another simple and very satisfactory control for cloth marionettes is that called the “spider” type. This control consists of three strips of wood about eight inches long, joined together at their centers in spider fashion. A cord or string loop may be provided at the center for hanging this control on a hook during performances. After one of these projecting wood strips has been determined as the front, a nail is driven in perpendicular position about one-half inch from the end of this strip. The

MAKING MARIONETTES

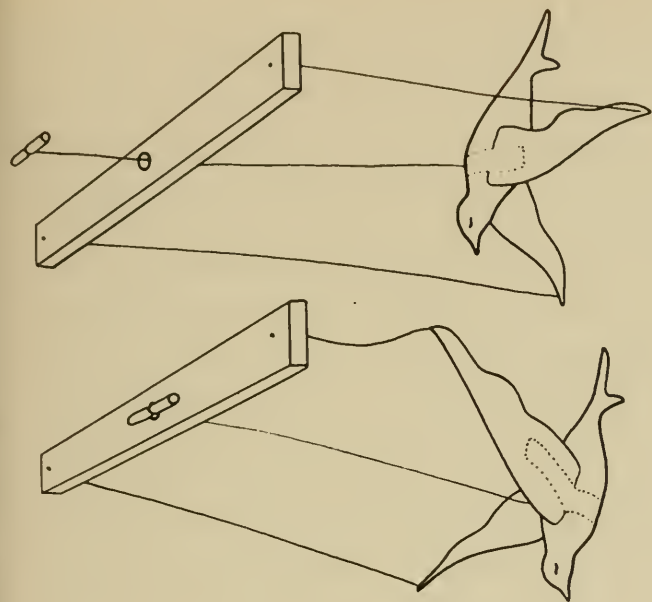
sharp point of the nail is filed blunt. On this peg will rest a knee control, which is a strip of wood about five inches long with a hole in the center large enough to fit loosely over the peg. On either end of this knee control small holes are drilled for the knee strings. To the two ends of the main control projecting on either side of the piece carrying the knee control peg, are attached the arm strings. To the next two projecting strips are attached the head strings. And to the rear piece is attached the back string. This type of control is grasped in the center of the spider with the left hand, with the right hand free to operate the knee control bar and to pull the strings on the main control.

If more complicated actions are required of the cloth marionette than these two controls allow, the simple control suggested for wooden marionettes may be satisfactorily used.

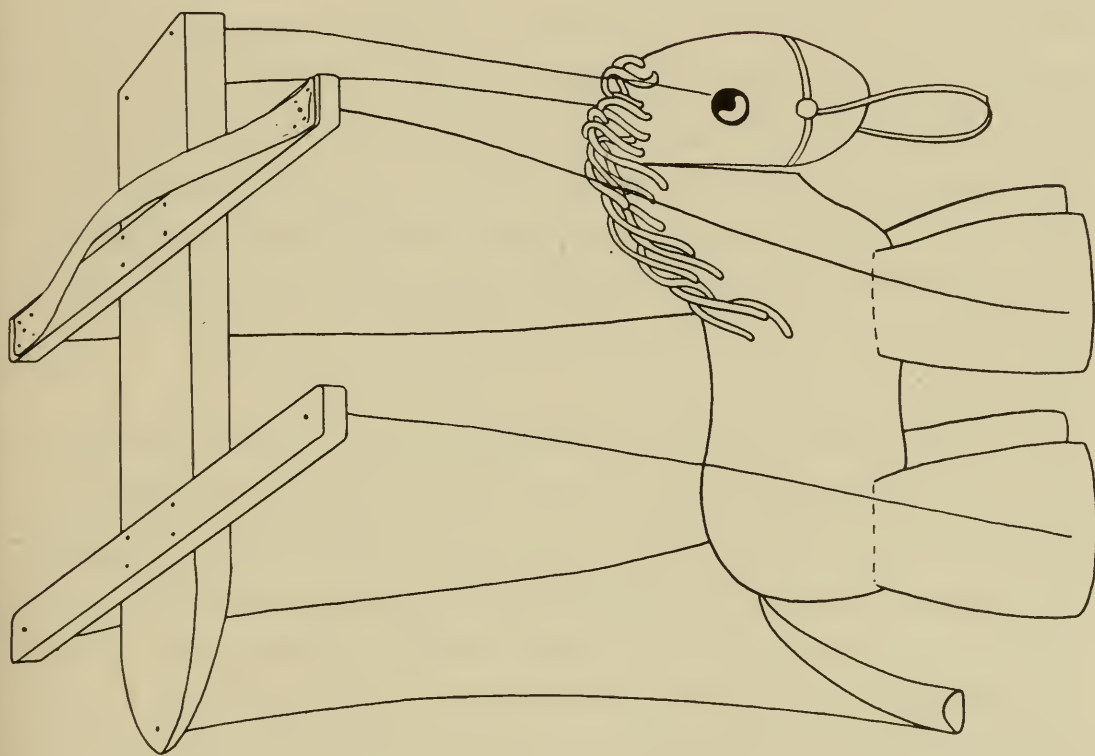
Controls are roughly finished, and may be left unpainted and unvarnished. No matter how crude they appear, they are completely successful instruments when they permit the marionette to operate in a competent fashion which will make the audience forget that the tiny figures before them are being operated from above.

STRINGING ALONG

You should now provide any holes which have not yet been drilled for stringing the wooden marionette. With a bore drill tiny holes in the palms of the hands and well into the insteps of the feet (if the puppet is to be equipped with foot strings). You have, of course, already provided holes at the knees. The back and shoulder strings require no drilled holes



ANIMAL AND
BIRD CONTROLS
SHOULD BE CONSTRUCTED
AS SIMPLY AS POSSIBLE.
ALMOST EVERY ANIMAL
REQUIRES A SLIGHTLY
DIFFERENT TYPE OF CON-
TROL.



MAKING MARIONETTES

since the strings may be sewed through the cloth body of the puppet.

Under ordinary circumstances, the strings for marionettes should be black since strings of this color are less noticeable to the audience. However, if a light blue cyclorama is employed as the background, it may be preferable to use gray or even white strings. Strings should be as nearly invisible as possible, and therefore the color which will best create the illusion of no strings at all should be employed. Probably the best medium for stringing marionettes is strong linen or button thread. Japanese silk trout line may also be used, but the linen or button thread is far more inexpensive.

The length of puppet strings may vary to meet your own special requirements. It is easier to learn to work marionettes with short strings, but of course the strings should be long enough to permit the concealment of the hands of the puppeteers from the audience. The length of the strings depends therefore somewhat upon the height of the stage arch. Under most conditions, strings ranging from thirty-six inches to forty-two inches are very satisfactory for eighteen-inch puppets.

STRING HIM UP!

In stringing the marionette, decide definitely upon the length of strings which you intend to use. (Naturally the strings for all your puppets should be uniform in order that you need not adjust yourself each time you change puppets during the course of a performance.) If you have decided on thirty-six-inch strings, cut two lengths of the heavy thread that long; one length thirty-six inches long plus the distance from the top

UNDER CONTROL

of the head to the middle of the back; two lengths thirty-six inches long plus the distance from the top of the head to the hands in a reposed position; and two lengths thirty-six inches long plus the distance from the top of the head to the knees. Using a needle for your convenience, securely fasten the first two strings to the eyelets provided at the sides of the head, and, in a loose knot, to the control. The doll will now suspend from the control, which may be conveniently placed on a hook high enough from the ground to permit the marionette to dangle. Then fasten the remainder of the strings, first to the figure and then, in loose knots, to the control, being careful that the strings do not become in any way tangled. Before adjusting the strings further, it is convenient to rub beeswax on the strings, to prevent knotting and tangling. Beeswax may be purchased at a low price from any 10¢ store. When the strings are waxed, hold the controls in the left hand, so that the puppet's feet just touch the floor. It will at once be apparent that some strings are too tight, while others are too loose. Adjust this condition by slackening or tightening the strings at the control. After the puppet seems to be in perfect balance, with the strings loose enough to allow the limbs to hang freely, and yet tight enough so that the limbs will react to the slightest operation, tightly tie the strings at the controls.

After you have constructed one or two marionettes you will begin to appreciate how vital the exact placing of the strings is to your puppet figures. If the strings are placed too far back on the head, the head will be inclined to droop forward; if the strings are placed too far forward, the head will fall backward in an unnatural manner. True, it would be striking and effec-

MAKING MARIONETTES

tive for some marionettes to hold their heads back in arrogant fashion, or to stand with their chins almost resting on their chests; however, this is a matter which should be determined in planning the marionette, rather than left to chance. Also, the hand strings may have the knots inside the palms of the hands, or on the backs of the hands, depending upon the exact arm motion desired. These, of course, are points which you must discover through your own experimenting.

When the puppet is strung, he must be carefully handled in order that he will not become almost hopelessly tangled. If the figure is to be used quite constantly, it is convenient to hang the control on a hook, allowing the marionette merely to suspend in mid-air. To keep the costume and paint clean, a bag with a drawstring may be fitted over the puppet when he is not in use. If the figure is to be stored or transported, probably the simplest way of keeping him free of tangles is to lay him in the bottom of a box or chest, spread a paper over the figure, and then place the controls on the paper. If the strings are long, they may be folded over the paper layer, and another paper layer placed on them before the controls themselves are laid down.

You have by now undoubtedly realized how individual is each marionette—each figure in your finished troupe may well be constructed and strung differently, and may possess even an individual sort of control adapted exactly to fit his particular character. The construction and operation of marionettes, instead of being a dully monotonous craft or hobby, is in reality fascinatingly varied and constantly new.

Chapter Nine

CIRCUS PARADE

IT is indeed unfortunate that although animal marionettes are totally amusing and important to the success of many performances, no definite formula for their construction can be given. The dog, so delightful in a puppet show, must differ in his construction from the sleek tiger or the heavy-footed elephant. This is true, of course, of only the more realistic puppets. Popular cartoon comedies in the movies have accustomed the public to think of show animals as almost human figures with animal heads. Cats, dogs, mice, etc., walk erectly on their hind legs, and their figures are dressed in rather fanciful human fashion. This expedient is possible and effective for marionette animals, whose figures may be built in exaggerated human form, and whose heads may be gigantic and extremely humorous exaggerations of those of living animals. But for the more realistic animals which appear in circus plays and tales of adventure, each figure must be considered as an individual problem. The puppeteer must rely almost entirely upon his own ingenuity for the creation of clever animal figures.

The most successful method of constructing realistic animal figures is to find as many drawings and photographs as possible of the particular animal which you wish to create. Notice how flexible is the body, how the legs move and are jointed, how

MAKING MARIONETTES

the head is joined to the body, etc. Obviously it will be impossible for you to construct a figure capable of the perfect movements of the animal itself, but it will be possible to generalize and conventionalize in such a manner that the effect of that

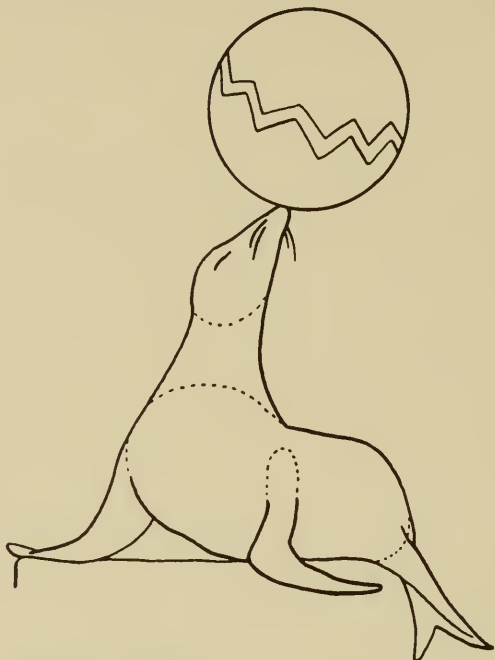


PLATE XXVII

particular animal will be created in simple manner (see Plates XXVII, XXVIII, and XXIX).

The material used for constructing the marionette will be determined by the type of animal itself. Stuffed lions, tigers, and cats may be made from velvets or even sleek materials. Dogs may be of wool with shaggy yarn hair. (Yarn is especially applicable for manes, tails, etc.) Horses, elephants, giraffes, etc., may be made of colored muslin, daubed and spotted in exaggerated fashion. All of these animals may, for the creation of an entirely different effect, also be constructed of wood or of wood covered with cloth.

CIRCUS PARADE

Snakes and worms may be created by stringing beads or small wooden cylinders rather far apart on a heavy cord. Over this very flexible skeleton, silk stocking or any similar material may be sewed. An amusing puppet results. This type of skeleton, with an enormous grotesque head at one end, is

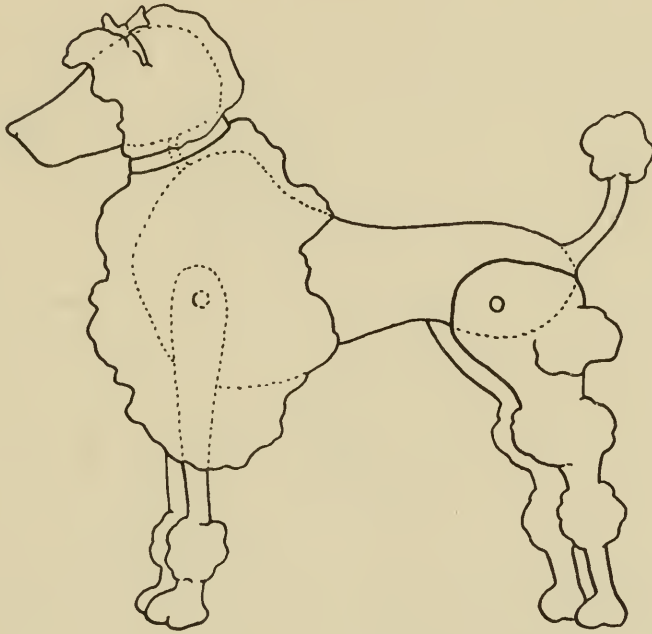


PLATE XXVIII

highly satisfactory for dragons. Such creatures with gigantic heads are especially convincing when equipped with jaws which open.

Bats, ravens, rocs, butterflies, bees, and other flying creatures (and how the audience delights in a flying puppet!) may be constructed by attaching flexible wings to a stuffed or wooden body form.

The puppet figure itself should be the initial consideration; the control may then be constructed to fit this figure. The

MAKING MARIONETTES

controls for animal marionettes are ordinarily constructed about a main bar running parallel with the spine of the figure (see Plate XXVI). On this, cross bars are placed for the attachment of the leg strings. Here again simplicity should be strived for, since the puppet animal, even though he moves in



PLATE XXIX

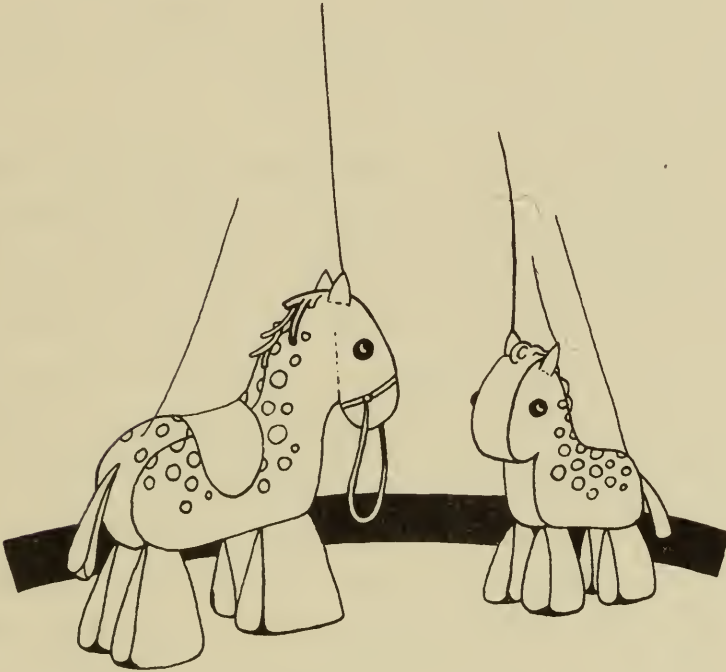
only very simple fashion, is certain to be successful and satisfying.

Although actual animals move their four feet in walking, it is often advisable, for facility of operation, to have only the front legs of animal puppets strung, merely allowing the hind legs to dangle. A very simple animal puppet may even have only two strings—one at each end of the creature. By rather bouncing each end alternately, the puppeteer is able to move the animal gaily about the stage. This puppet is especially desirable when other figures are to ride on its back; there is little chance of the strings becoming entangled.

Animals and birds may be as quaint and as imaginative as

CIRCUS PARADE

the puppeteer desires or the performance permits. The animal, almost no matter how poorly constructed, is the one member of the cast assured a joyous welcome. His performance is certain to be enthusiastically acclaimed.



Chapter Ten

ACT ONE

WHEN you first step up onto a chair or bench, clutching the puppet control firmly in your left hand, and attempt to walk the tiny marionette figure across the floor in front of you, your reaction will, perhaps, be one of discouragement or disappointment. For the tiny figure will drag his feet pathetically over the ground, or will merely sweep through the air with his feet frantically kicking. Your sense of humor will finally triumph, and you will go into gales of laughter over the ineffectual movements of the ridiculous figure suspended from your hand.

It will at once be evident that before you can make your marionette perform even the simplest movements and gestures you must accustom yourself to the feel of the marionette in your hand—to the feel of the position of your hand and body which will permit your puppet to suspend with his feet just reaching the ground. If this fundamental position is back-breakingly uncomfortable, the strings should be shortened or lengthened a few inches; it would be well-nigh impossible to operate an awkwardly strung marionette throughout a lengthy performance. Of course only five or ten minutes of operating even a properly strung marionette will at first seem extremely tiresome, but you will soon become accustomed to the rather

ACT ONE

cramped position essential to marionette operation, and will be able to uncomplainingly endure a practice or performance an hour or two in length.

Two or three weeks of patient and intensive practice are essential before you should attempt a marionette performance. In such a short space of time you will, of course, not be an artist at the task. The perfect marionette operation of the Italian puppeteers has been the result of months and years of conscientious devotion to this one accomplishment. After you have become efficient in the operation of one marionette, you will naturally be able to operate other figures after only short practice. So concentrate your attention at first on the operation of only one marionette. Become proficient in manipulating this one figure. Make him walk, dance, and "talk." Acquaint yourself thoroughly with the positions of the various strings. Accustom yourself to talking at the same time you are operating the figure. You will then be able, in a very short time, to operate other marionette figures adeptly, and to quickly learn the movements and gestures, and to naturally deliver the dialogue, required by the particular performance which you intend to give.

STEP LIVELY

Almost without exception, the marionette is walked from his knee strings, rather than his foot strings. The use of the latter results in an objectionable awkwardness and stiffness. The knee strings, on the contrary, permit the legs to move freely in the desired direction. The knee control is lifted from its peg and held well in front of the main control. The small

MAKING MARIONETTES

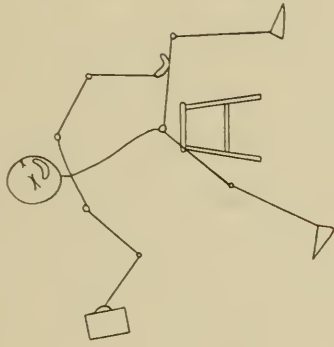
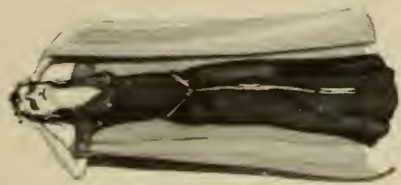
control is tipped back and forth, which moves the legs alternately. At the same time both controls are moved gradually forward in whatever direction the marionette figure is desired to move. The puppet, of course, never walks really well. Instead he jogs across the stage in his own peculiar and jerky manner.

Dancing a marionette is best accomplished by the use of both feet and knee strings. The knee strings pull the knees forward while the lower legs and feet are allowed to dangle. The feet strings, however, move the entire leg in a stiff manner, to the front or side or even to the back. Movements in a dance will naturally be quicker and more complicated than those of walking. Nevertheless, dancing a marionette effectively is often far easier than walking the figure convincingly. A gay, dancing marionette is popular with every audience, but the dance should be sufficiently short and varied to constantly hold the interest of the audience. Seek always to avoid tiring the audience; it is infinitely better to slight the audience than to tire it.

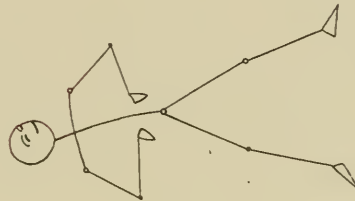
"Talking" a marionette should consist of definitely planned arm gestures and pantomime. Of great importance is the early realization that the audience must at all times be aware of which actor is talking. The radio has proven to us how the audience may be made to realize which unseen character is speaking, through the employment of a wide variety of voices. If several male characters are speaking together, actors whose voices are widely varied are selected for the parts. Deep voices are contrasted with shrill voices; firm, vigorous voices, with quavering, feeble voices, etc., so that the listeners are never at a loss to know which character is speaking. This practice is one which



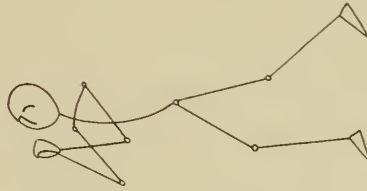
DESPAIR



JOVIAL REVELRY



BRAGGADOCIO



SUPPLICATION



PANTOMIME POSES
APPLICABLE TO PUPPET OPERATION
PLATE XXX

MAKING MARIONETTES

should be applied to puppetry insofar as it is possible to do so.

There is in puppetry, however, another important way of informing the audience regarding the possessor of the speaking voice. It has become almost a set rule of marionette operation that when two or more figures are conversing together, only the speaker is permitted to gesticulate. (There are, of course, exceptions as, for instance, when another marionette nods his approval of what the first is saying.) When a character stops talking, his hands stop moving. By following this simple rule, the audience is appreciably aided in understanding the performance. Petty gestures are eliminated and the performance acquires strength and character through a certain simplicity and restraint. When the actions of the characters are so limited, each movement must be essential and important to the efficacy of the entire performance; therefore, the action is not in any way merely spontaneous on the part of the operator, but is, instead, carefully planned and practiced. Whether the puppet will simply accent his speech by moving his head or hand, or whether his entire body will assume a new position, is a matter requiring thought and consideration.

PUPPET PANTOMIME

In order to make all movements as significant and meaningful as possible it is helpful for the operator to have some knowledge of pantomime, which is, in itself, a fascinating art far more important in ages other than our own. A brief study of the positions which living pantomimists assume in order to portray various moods, emotions, and effects offers numerous suggestions for clever marionette operation (see Plates XXX and

ACT ONE

XXXI). It is surprising and thrilling to discover how the exaggerated poses and movements of pantomime may be adapted to the art of marionette operation.

It would naturally be highly desirable for the operator to be able to see his performing puppet exactly as it is seen by the audience. Since this is impossible, it is advisable for the operator to carefully watch marionettes manipulated by other operators, noting what is effective and what merely wasted and confusing motion. If possible, it is also advisable to operate the marionette before a mirror tipped at an angle permitting the operator to see his puppet from a new view. Helpful also is having a fellow puppeteer view and criticize the performance of the marionette.

LITTLE MAN, BIG VOICE

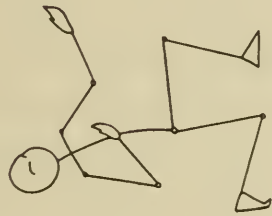
Intrinsically related to the actual operation of the marionette is the speaking for the tiny figure. Ordinarily, and with greatest success, the puppeteer speaks for the marionette whom he is manipulating. It is true that frequently persons standing beside the puppet stage watch the action of the performance and speak the lines at the proper moments. The rather questionable advantage of such an arrangement is that the parts do not necessarily need to be memorized by the speakers; instead the lines can be read from the manuscripts. The puppeteer is then not concerned with expressively delivering the dialogue. He can concentrate his attention solely on the operation of the doll suspended from his hand.

However, after you have operated a marionette for a short space of time, you will realize how natural and simple it is

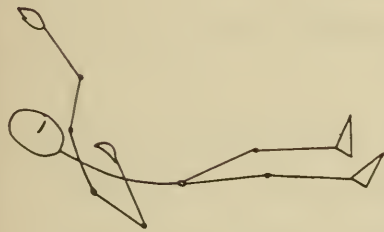
MAKING MARIONETTES

to speak and operate the marionette at the same time—how much more effectively the action and the words can be synchronized, and how much greater character can be given the entire production. Together, the puppet and the puppeteer create for the audience a living character. Even a bashful or diffident operator will be surprised at how readily he will forget himself when operating puppets, and at the abandon and expression which he will give to the delivery of his lines. Fortunately, the puppeteer is not subject to stage fright—the tiny figure in his hand must bear the brunt of facing the audience. The puppeteer does not know the tenseness common to many stage actors, and as a result he is better able to speak the dialogue and to operate the marionette.

It is simplest, and perhaps most effective when possible, to use one's natural voice in speaking for the marionette. That is, the voice should not be thrown unnaturally high or low, or in other manner grossly distorted, so that the speaking of the lines will be a constant effort, straining the voice and lessening the amount of attention which can be given to the shades of expression of the voice. To obtain variety of voices, some characters may speak with an orotund voice, others with their words sharp and clipped, and others in a slow, heavy manner. The delivery should be somewhat exaggerated, just as everything about marionettes is exaggerated. Above all, the enunciation of each character should be distinct and clear, since it is always annoying for the audience to miss lines which they may deem important. A sort of ventriloquism is not, as many people believe, employed by puppeteers. The operator merely speaks in a clear, full voice while his head is held in the down-



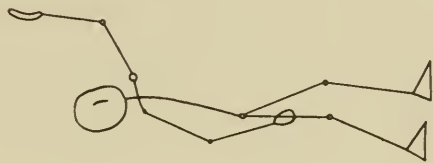
A LOVER'S BOW



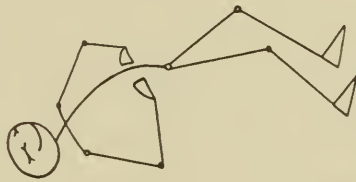
A FORMAL BOW



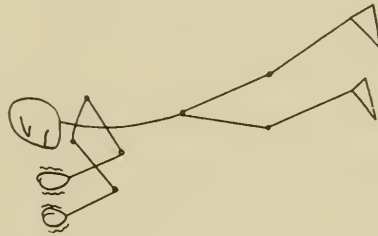
A COURT BOW



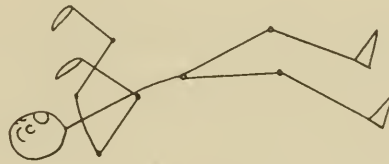
PREVENTION



MERRIMENT



ANGER



FEAR



EVIL

MORE PANTOMIME POSES
USEFUL IN PUPPET OPERATION.
PLATE XXXI

MAKING MARIONETTES

ward position natural to puppet operation. The imagination of the audience makes the lines seem to issue from the mouths of the figures which they are watching, rather than from some invisible humans standing high above the jointed dolls.

If there are only a few characters in a performance, it is best to have a separate operator for each puppet. When a considerable number of puppets appear, many with only very minor roles, it is possible and even preferable to have one operator manipulate several marionettes. Fewer people are then required backstage, where space is always at a premium. When an operator speaks for several different marionettes he should carefully vary his method of delivery in order that a contrast of voices will be maintained.

Lines are, of course, memorized, unless the manipulators are talented enough to speak lines extemporaneously. It is possible for puppeteers like the famous *Commedia dell'Arte* players, only to plan roughly the action outline for a performance, and to deliver the dialogue extemporaneously as the performance proceeds. Surely with such a system the lines would never seem mechanical and memorized, but would have a desirable spontaneity. However, only the cleverest actors and comedians would trust themselves to such a scheme. Moreover, it is obviously possible to make memorized lines seem spontaneous and natural, which is of course essential to the success of most performances. But in order to achieve spontaneity with memorized dialogue, the operator must know his lines thoroughly so that as the action of the play proceeds, he may become thoroughly absorbed in the character he is manipulating, while the lines, themselves, will flow naturally and without effort.

Chapter Eleven

BACKSTAGE

IF YOU have ever visited backstage at a professional puppet show, you have probably been surprised by the simplicity and even crudeness of the stage on which the tiny figures perform. You, perhaps for the first time, realized that there is a certain quality about the marionette which makes him charming when performing in even the rudest and most ingenuous setting.

Marionettes which possess a permanent home are usually more elaborately surrounded than the itinerant puppets which perform in various theaters, auditoriums, and halls. The traveling puppeteer must transport not only the marionettes and their scenery, but their stage and backstage equipment as well. Equipment, then, must necessarily be simple and built as compactly as possible. Furthermore, the stage and equipment must be very "flexible" in order to cope with the conditions and facilities of the various halls.

But whether you must plan a permanent stage or one that may be conveniently transported, the problems to be faced are fundamentally the same. The most important consideration is, of course, the visibility of the audience. The level of the puppet floor must be high enough above the audience level to permit clear vision of the tiny figures. In movie theaters where

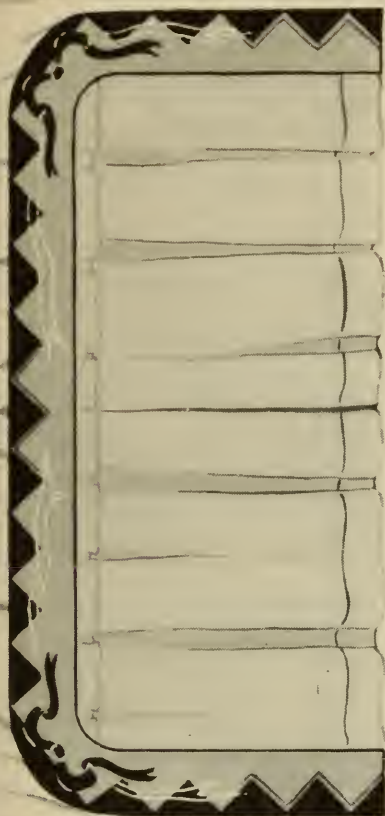
MAKING MARIONETTES

patrons face a screen on which the enormous pictures are projected, the audience is hardly aware of often being unable to see the entire screen. But in the puppet theater, the proscenium and figures are usually very small, making it essential that every member of the audience see the entire stage. If the hall is large and the auditorium floor only slightly elevated in the rear, the puppet stage must be high, and the action take place at the very front of the tiny stage. If, on the other hand, the hall is small, or the seats well elevated, the puppet stage may be only a few feet from the ground. At any rate, every member of the audience is entitled to a perfect view of the performance, and this should be the prime consideration in planning any marionette stage.

Well-equipped stages usually possess platforms which may be used in creating a satisfactory level for the presentation of the puppet show. Otherwise, it is possible to use two or three large tables like those usually found in churches and schools. These tables may be placed firmly together to form a platform, and the entire puppet stage equipment may be placed on this high level. Too, it is possible to build up a suitable platform by resting the equipment on wooden sawhorses.

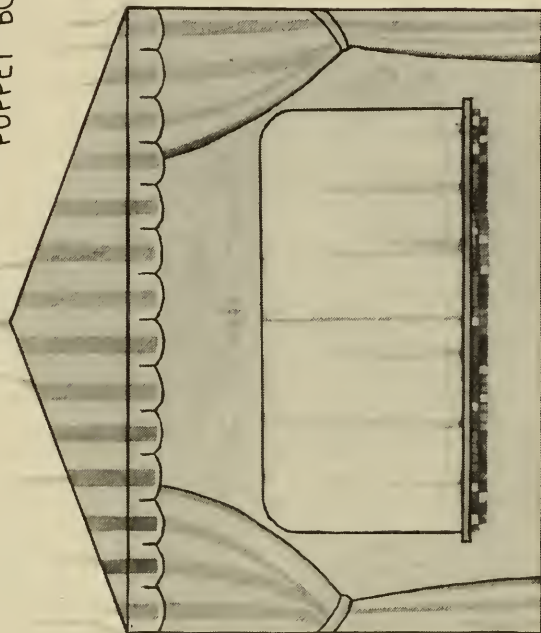
A STAGE WITHIN A STAGE

The size of the proscenium (the arch of the tiny stage) will vary according to the size of the marionettes (see Plate XXXII). If the arch is very high, the strings of the puppets will have to be inconveniently long or the hands of the operators will be seen by the front row audience. If twelve- to eighteen-inch marionettes are used, the proscenium may be



A SIMPLY DESIGNED STAGE ARCH.

A STAGE FRONT SIMILAR
TO THE CONTINENTAL
PUPPET BOOTHS



A DRAPED STAGE OPENING.
STAGE OPENINGS PLATE XXXII

MAKING MARIONETTES

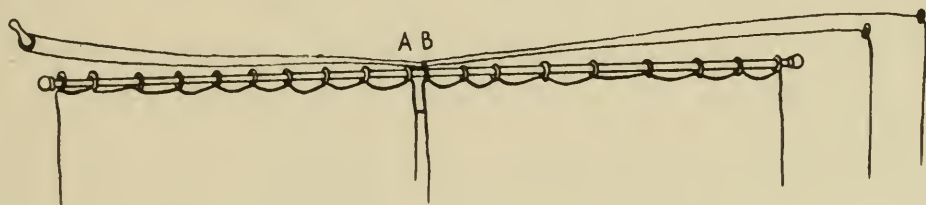
from two and one-half to four feet in height, and from five to eight feet in width. If the marionettes are larger, a higher and wider proscenium may be necessary. The arch itself may be built of wood, wallboard, or draped curtains—again depending upon the facilities under which the performance will be given. The opening may be a simple rectangle or, better yet, a graceful arch. Its front, if of wood or wallboard, should be painted in some gay manner congruous with the performance as a whole. Since marionettes are naturally gay, toy-like creatures, the proscenium may be outlined with a simple design appropriate to the performance which is to be given. In the Continental puppet theaters, the booths and prosceniums were gaily and elaborately painted, and it is sometimes clever to paint the stage exterior in a manner carrying out this early tradition. However, the more modern trend is toward simplicity—the employment of simple design and color which will contribute to, rather than detract from, the performance itself.

Within the proscenium hang the tiny curtains which, too, must conform to the mood of the entire production. These curtains should be made of a material light enough to hang in miniature velvet folds, and yet heavy enough to prevent the audience from seeing the puppets and scenery until the curtains are opened. Unbleached muslin, hand-dyed, is amazingly effective, as are certain materials which may be purchased in any drapery store. The curtains may be designed with crayons, paint, or dye, with figures or scenes, or simply with a conventional border design. Although it is possible to make a curtain which will roll up and down, it is generally simpler and even more convenient to make curtains which separate in the middle

BACKSTAGE

and hang in graceful folds at each side of the proscenium (see Plate XXXIII).

When the curtains are opened, the audience should never be allowed to see, at either right or left, into the stage wings of your private backstage. The scenery then, must be planned to completely conceal the backstage from every member of



CURTAINS SEPARATING IN THE MIDDLE ARE FASTENED TO THE CURTAIN ROPE AT "A" AND "B" SO THAT THE PULLING OF ONE END OF THE ROPE OPENS THE CURTAINS, WHILE THE OTHER CLOSES THEM.
PLATE XXXIII

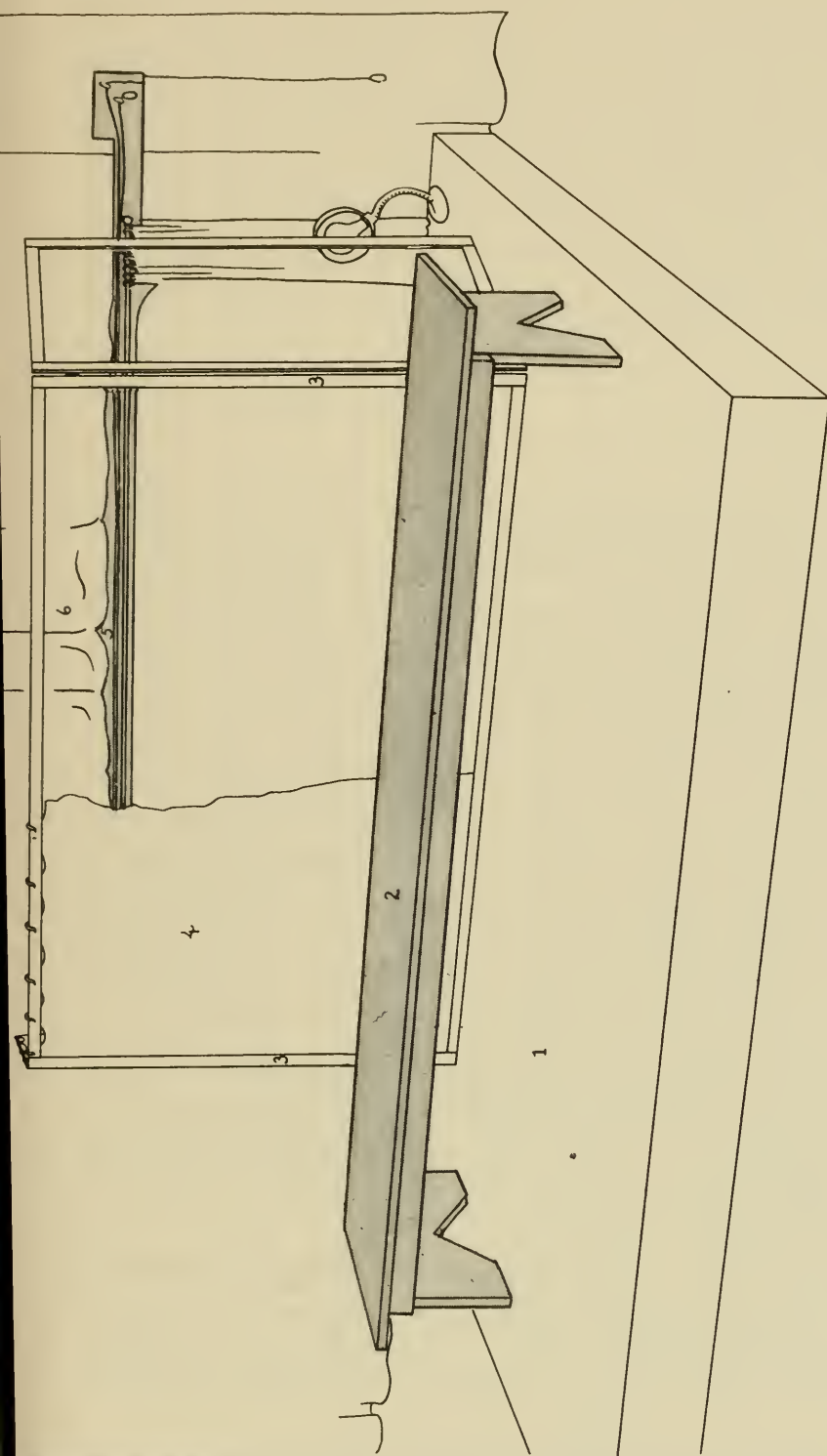
the audience (see Plate XXXV). A wooden frame, hung with drop curtains, will achieve this purpose by continuing straight across the back to a distance at right and left beyond which the audience could not possibly see. But when one is cramped for space, as is frequently the case, this frame may simply extend across the back and on each side far enough to cut off the vision of the audience, yet leaving enough room between it and the back of the proscenium arch to permit the entrances and exits of the puppets. This wooden frame should be a sturdily built affair which will permit the operators to lean over it and brace themselves on it when necessary. The stage floor (the distance between the proscenium front and the wooden frame) should be deep enough to allow facility of movement

MAKING MARIONETTES

of the puppets, and yet shallow enough so that the puppeteers may move the tiny figures well to the front of the stage. Eighteen-inch puppets require a stage several feet in depth.

Behind the wooden frame is the bench or "bridge" on which the puppeteers stand when operating the marionettes (see Plate XXXIV). This bench should be raised sufficiently above the puppet stage floor level to permit the operators to lean over the stage to conveniently manipulate the puppets. When one has a permanent theater in which to work, this bridge may be a bulky affair, with steps at either end for the convenience of the operators. When, however, one must transport his equipment from hall to hall, it is adequate to simply use a sturdy bench, which may, perhaps, fold up for facility in transportation. Similarly, the proscenium and scenery rack may be built to fold up compactly.

These few pieces of equipment are the fundamentals of the puppet stage, and can be rendered as simply or as elaborately as conditions and funds allow. With this basic equipment, along with simple lights, an adequate stage for a successful puppet performance is possible. In assembling these, the large auditorium curtains are first closed, and the large platform, tables, or whatever elevating arrangement is to be employed, placed flush with these curtains. (In halls not equipped with curtains, it is necessary for the puppeteer to supply his own large stage curtains, suspending them on wire to close off the portion of the hall to be used as backstage. A screen arrangement is also possible.) If the platform is a rather unsightly affair, it will be next necessary to conceal the front with a curtain or drape. The puppet proscenium is then placed on the platform, and



- A SIMPLE BACKSTAGE ARRANGEMENT PLATE XXIV
1. THE PLATFORM ELEVATING THE PUPPET PROSCENIUM SO THAT THE ENTIRE AUDIENCE IS AFFORDED A FULL VIEW OF THE TINY STAGE.
 2. THE BENCH, OR "BRIDGE", ON WHICH THE PUPPETEERS STAND.
 3. THE RACK ON WHICH THE CURTAINS AND SCENERY SUSPEND.
 4. CURTAINS OR SCENERY.
 5. THE PROSCENIUM OF THE PUPPET STAGE, WITH ITS CURTAINS AND CURTAIN ROPE.
 6. THE CURTAINS OF THE AUDITORIUM STAGE.

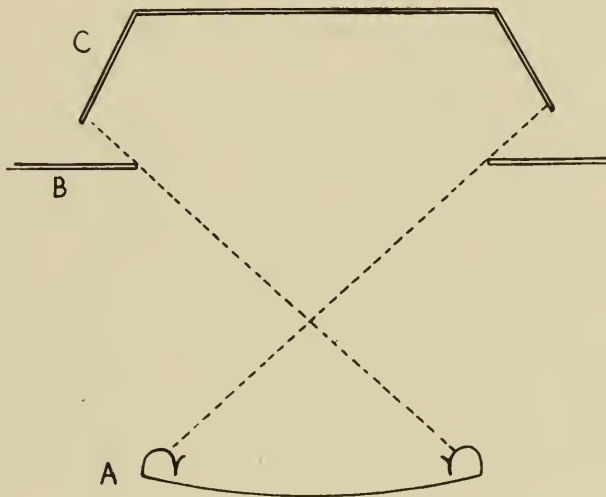
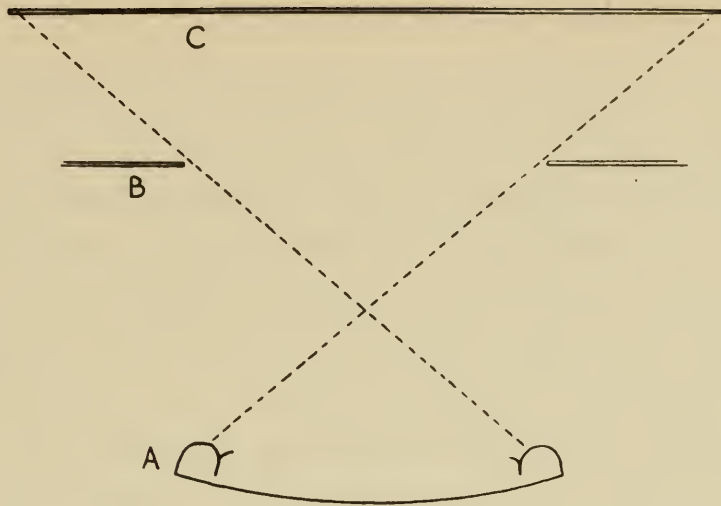
MAKING MARIONETTES

the auditorium curtains divided and pinned to permit only the small proscenium arch to show. The bridge may then be set up, and any other backstage arrangements made. It is convenient to have a simple rack on which the puppets may hang ready to be quickly grabbed by the operators. This rack should stand behind, and within easy access to, the operators on the bridge. If such a rack is not possessed, the marionettes may simply be spread in a fanlike arrangement on the floor of the stage proper.

LIGHTS AND ILLUSION

The lighting of the stage is not difficult, but does require considerable care and experimentation. If the puppet stage is not required to be constantly transported from hall to hall, an elaborate lighting system is possible, complete with footlights and overhead lights. But such a system is in no way necessary. As a matter of fact, a very satisfactory effect may be produced simply with two extension bulbs hung low at the sides of the proscenium, or on crook-necked standards, with the lights partially surrounded by reflectors. These lights should be placed well to the front in order that undesirable shadows may be avoided. If the lights are not well placed, the eyes of the puppets will be dark pockets of shadow, or the strings will be very apparent. Through careful experimentation you can easily determine exactly where the lights should be placed for best results.

Colored lighting effects may be created through the use of colored silk or gelatine papers. Blue will suggest moonlight; red, firelight; orange, sunrise, etc. On the living stage, light is



SIMPLE SCENERY ARRANGEMENTS TO PREVENT THE AUDIENCE FROM SEEING BACKSTAGE. PLATE XXXV

- A. AUDIENCE, WITH THE DOTTED LINES REPRESENTING AUDIENCE LINES OF VISION.
- B. THE PROSCENIUM ARCH OF THE PUPPET STAGE.
- C. SCENERY ON THE PUPPET STAGE.

MAKING MARIONETTES

a most important factor in effective production. Through the use of color, moods and emotions are created or aroused. The puppeteer should observe the use of lights on the living stage, for these same effects may be created on the marionette stage. It should be observed how comedy is played in a white or yellow light; how straw and amber light suggest midday sun; how green gives at once the feeling of the supernatural; etc. Audiences are accustomed to feeling a certain mood created by a certain color, and the puppeteer may well take advantage of this fact.

Chapter Twelve

THE STAGE IS SET

NOT LONG ago when one went to the theater he expected to see actors playing before drops on which were painted, almost like enormous illustrations, gardens with trees, fountains, and sky, or city streets with buildings, sidewalks, and even automobiles parked on the strangely perspectived avenues, or hillsides with villages seen far in the distance. Illusion was indeed doubtful, especially when one saw the black shadows of the actors falling across landscapes, buildings, and villages purportedly miles in the distance.

The modern trend in stage design has, during recent years, been to escape from such painted drops. As a result, we now expect to see simple, suggestive sets which in no way detract from the illusion desired by the playwright. When the designer for the living stage turned from the painted backdrops, he naturally employed simple properties against simple backgrounds. If he desired a garden scene, rather than painting that scene on a large drop and then setting a bench before the picture he had created, he employed perhaps a simple blue cyclorama against which were outlined tall poplars. Across the back of the stage ran a simple, yet solid and able-to-be-touched wall. To this he added a bench, fountain, or any other necessary properties. Subtle lighting was then applied to the whole to

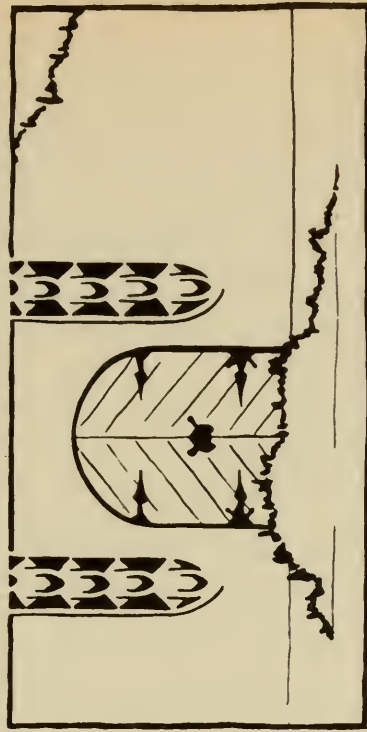
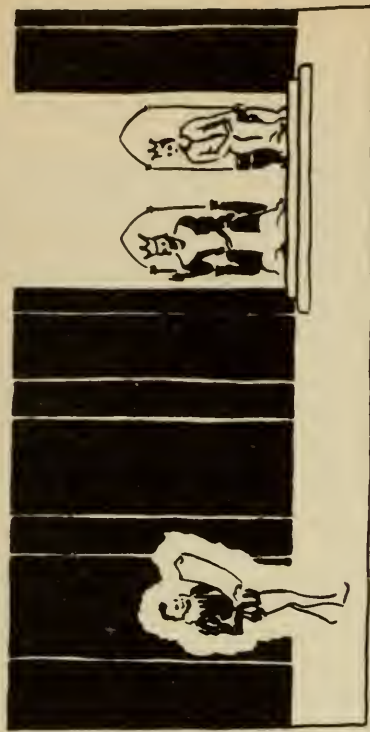
MAKING MARIONETTES

create a distance, as though the sky were actually far behind the wall. The lighting accentuated the lines of the scenery and gave it depth and solidity and strength never achieved by an obvious scene painted on an obvious curtain or canvas.

Borrowing from both these extremes is the scenery for marionette performances. At once it is apparent that the former method was inclined to keep the stage floor simple, while the background alone made the entire setting seem elaborate and decorative enough to satisfy anyone's tastes. This obviously is an ideal arrangement for marionettes since variety of setting may be obtained in the background and the stage kept almost entirely free of properties in which the puppets might, and indeed would, become entangled.

Yet we have come to consider the painted drops old-fashioned and almost ludicrous. When the movies desire to ridicule our fairly recent past, they show a theatrical scene before a grossly elaborate painted curtain with the shadows of mere men streaming from Main to Tenth Street. And so, now that this method has become so definitely dated and so generally recognized as a theatrical medium of the past, the puppeteer may indeed hesitate to employ it.

However, since it is so appropriate to puppetry, the wise thing to do is to modernize this method according to present trends. Since the keynote of scenery, as well as of plays themselves, is simplicity and sincerity and suggestion, these elements should be introduced into the puppet drops. And since puppets are inherently unreal—being conventionalized caricatures moving in mechanical manner and making no bid for the conviction of the living stage—drops may be conventionalized and



SCENERY ARRANGEMENTS PLATE XXXVI
SIMPLE BACKDROPS GIVE VARIETY TO THE STAGE
PICTURE WHILE LEAVING THE STAGE FLOOR FREE
FOR THE ACTION OF THE PUPPETS.

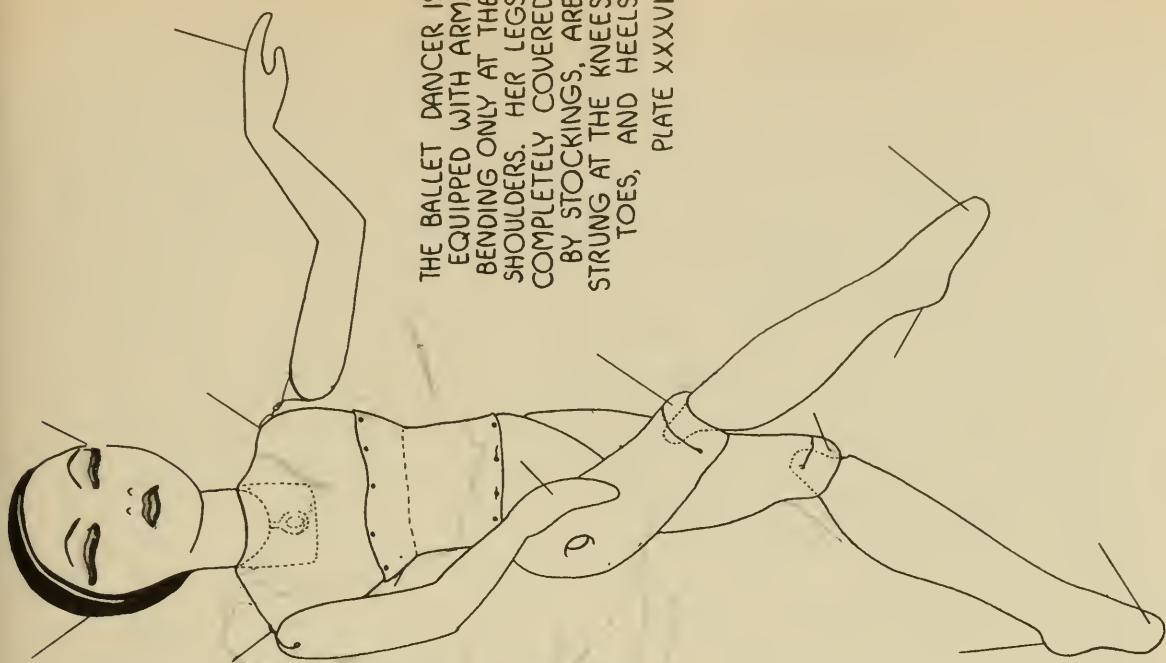
MAKING MARIONETTES

simplified in surprisingly effective and suitable manner (see Plàte XXXVI). The most efficacious settings may be obtained through symbolic or suggestive backgrounds which leave the stage almost entirely clear for the dramatic action.

In utilizing this scenic plan, you must consider time and place setting, together with the nature of the performance. If the play calls for a medieval castle, you should find authentic illustrations showing the characteristics of such architecture of the particular country and the particular era involved. Then, considering the mood of the play, you should determine whether the scene is to suggest a quiet peacefulness, a somber austerity, or an ominous mystery. With the fundamental knowledge which you have gained of the medieval architecture and a formulated idea of the mood desired, you can create a background which will give the desired effect.

Simply because you discover that castles were elaborately carved and buttressed does not mean that you must reproduce in exact detail such characteristics. A far more striking setting will be produced merely by expressing the elaborate carving and thick buttresses by a massive gate against a plain background, or by a bulky wall extending in a simple and beautiful line across the back. The modern audience accepts the fact that the scene is being played before a castle if only a gate set in a ponderous black background is apparent. The imaginations of the audience supply the turrets and windows and ivy-covered walls. Similarly, a tree silhouetted against a perfectly plain cyclorama suggests a landscape; a throne, a royal throne-room; a mast and sail, the deck of a ship.

Just how true this is, is difficult to appreciate unless you are



THE BALLET DANCER IS
EQUIPPED WITH ARMS
BENDING ONLY AT THE
SHOULDERS. HER LEGS,
COMPLETELY COVERED
BY STOCKINGS, ARE
STRUNG AT THE KNEES,
TOES, AND HEELS.

PLATE XXXVII



MAKING MARIONETTES

vitality awake to the current trends in the theatrical world. But how fortunate this is to the puppeteer, is at once apparent. For illusion is created without the stage being at all cluttered with properties—furniture, bushes, and jimcracks not absolutely required by the action of the play. Free of all such unnecessary stumbling-blocks, the marionette is allowed to wander about the stage without tangling pitifully and being compelled to remain helpless until the stage curtains have been closed and the difficulty eliminated.

SCENE-SHIFTER

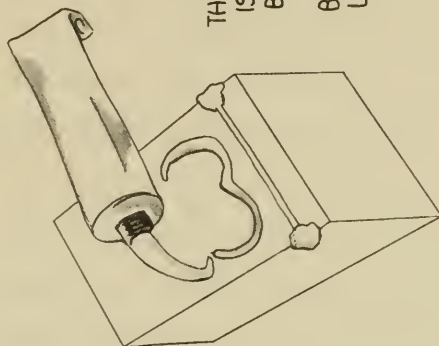
And so, with effective simplicity as goal, your backdrops may be made, following a working sketch drawn exactly to the scale of your stage. A stock-in-trade for all puppet performances is a black backdrop if the strings are black, or a blue or medium gray drop if the strings are a more neutral color. Against this background may be placed a gate, a tree, a conventional cottage, or any simple piece of scenery desired. This backdrop should be of muslin, broadcloth, flannelette, or some similar material which will fall in graceful folds, simulating the velvet drops of the living stage. The drop should be equipped with hooks so that it may be quickly attached to the wooden frame which is part of the backstage.

Wallboard, heavy cardboard, or cloth may be used when the setting is to be painted as a backdrop. If wallboard or cardboard is used, the scenes may be painted with tempera or oil paints, or drawn with crayons or pastels. If the scene is to be painted on cloth, tempera paint, water colors, crayons, or pastels may be used. (When crayons are used, the colors should

THE COLLAR FOR THIS
HERO OF A THRILLING
MELODRAMA IS FASTENED
TO THE NECK, WHILE
THE WHITE SHIRT FRONT
IS MERELY PAINTED
ON THE WOODEN SHOULDER
PIECE.

THE PIECE OF FURNITURE
IS SIMPLY A CARDBOARD
BOX ON WHICH PLASTIC
WOOD SCROLLS HAVE
BEEN RAISED TO SIMU-
LATE WOOD CARVING.

PLATE XXXVIII



MAKING MARIONETTES

be placed definitely and solidly on the cloth and, when completed, a hot iron run over the material to melt the wax into the cloth surface.) The backdrops also may be equipped with hooks so that they can be quickly hung on the wooden back rack. It is possible to have the settings for a play placed successively on top of each other on the rack, and each scene simply removed upon the completion of the act in which it appears.

The colors of scenery for the puppet theater should, like the settings themselves, be simple, with a few main hues predominating. Again colors should express the mood of the play or action. Too, the colors of the costumes in which the marionettes are dressed should be taken into consideration. If the actors are dressed in pastel or vivid shades, a dark background will complement them. If the characters wear costumes of dark, rich materials, a light background will show them to advantage. A background should be simply that affording a setting to best accentuate the acting figures.

PROPERTIES

It is true that certain properties are absolutely essential to the action of many plays. Chairs, benches, cupboards, and other objects figure in the plot and must be present on the stage. When such properties are required, their construction and design should receive the same exacting care which you have given each element of the entire production. These objects must be in identical proportion with the figures if proper illusion is to be created. Simple in form and free of anything on which the strings might become entangled, these properties

THE STAGE IS SET

should harmonize with the scenery while accomplishing their purposes in the dramatic action.

Furniture in exact proportion to the figures may be carved of wood and painted or varnished in whatever manner desired. The lines of such wooden furniture should be simple if one depends only on the carving for detail, since elaborate carving is an arduous task requiring considerable skill. A far more practical and equally effective way of building carved furniture is to build the pieces roughly of wood, thin wallboard, or heavy cardboard. On these crude foundations may be raised extremely fancy and elaborate carvings by the simple application of gesso or plastic wood. The former material, a thick gluey mixture, can be applied with a brush or small stick. The latter material, if purchased in tubes, can be squeezed directly onto the objects themselves in delightful scrolls and clever embellishments (see Plate XXXVIII). When the "carved" designs have dried, the furniture may be stained, painted, or varnished.

By striving for simplicity and suggestion, and incorporating into your scenery only the elements absolutely essential, you will achieve beautiful settings which will immeasurably enhance your marionette performance.

Chapter Thirteen

WHAT TO DO

IT is fascinating to read a history of the theater and to note the important position which marionettes assumed throughout the ages. One cannot help but be impressed by the knowledge that the Greeks used puppets to present biting satires ridiculing prominent persons of the day. Or that the Romans employed puppets for the presentation of ironic parodies. Or that the Javanese portrayed with mechanical figures, princes and gods who could not be mimicked by human actors. Authors of marionette dramas then had purposes deeper than the mere pleasing of an audience.

Today marionettes do not hold the same prominent position which once was theirs. Performances are almost solely for the entertainment of the audience. True, the plots of puppet plays often point a definite moral, and sometimes caricature and even taunt living personages. But fundamentally, the modern puppet performance is considered as little more than delightful entertainment.

For that reason, combined with the fact that puppets are themselves gay, amusing creatures, plays or acts selected for presentation should contain some humorous element. And usually the humor (of simple and rather obvious nature) should depend on action rather than clever repartee or subtle situation.

WHAT TO DO

Action and humor, then, are the basic essentials for a successful puppet show. The over-serious or emotional piece, while not entirely banned from the marionette repertoires, is certainly not a wise selection, especially for the amateur puppeteer. The audience expect to laugh and will, perhaps, laugh whether or not the sketch is designedly humorous. When this occurs, as it does even on the living stage, the play is a failure.

ACTION AND HUMOR

In selecting a play for marionettes, the action and the humorous elements which can be introduced should first be considered. Action should, of course, be within the scope of the marionette. The incidents should permit the marionettes to be exhibited at their best, since there are certain acts which puppets can perform very well and others which they do feebly, if at all. Plays with action embodying the former movements should be sought. Dances, feats of strength, battles, and displays of magic are always effective and popular. The puppeteer should, as well, take cognizance of the type of audience which will see the performance. Young children require quite different fare from that required by adults. Yet, surprisingly enough, plays planned solely for the amusement of children are often completely entertaining to adults.

Fairy tales, fables, and narratives of adventure furnish excellent plots about which puppet performances may be constructed. Fairy tales or stories embodying the make-believe are especially desirable. Giants and ogres, brownies, fairies, and dwarfs, dragons and hobgoblins, lend themselves admirably to

MAKING MARIONETTES

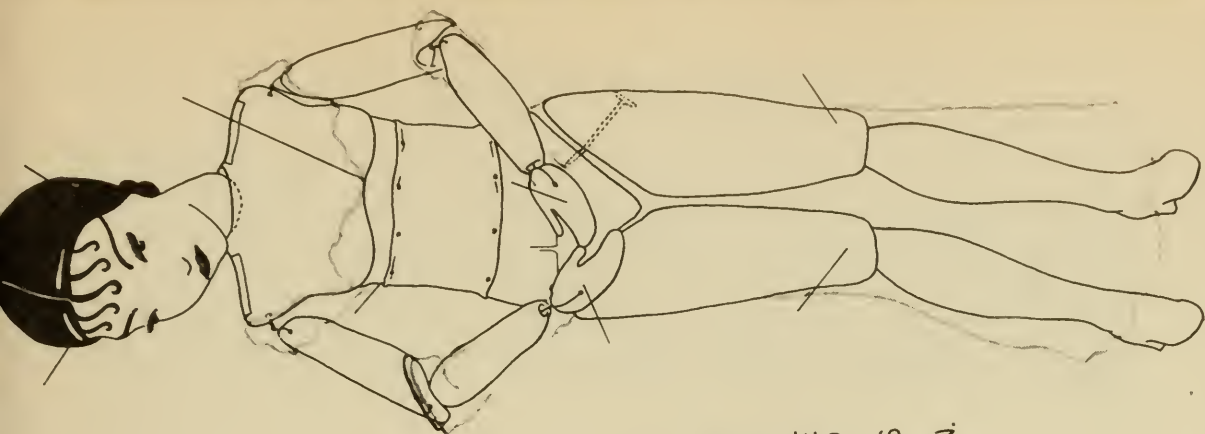
puppetry. Stories in the fairy tale category are, to name only a few:

Sleeping Beauty
King of the Golden River
Three Billy Goats Gruff
Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp
Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves
The Little Mermaid
Gulliver's Travels
Rip Van Winkle
Alice in Wonderland
Rumpelstiltskin

Fables and legends, too, offer a fertile source, although care must be taken that the plays based on such works are not overly serious or moral. They are delightful when they require talking animal characters, magical transformations, or other characters or incidents of similar nature. Especially adaptable fables or legends are:

The Fox and the Grapes
The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse
The Fox and the Crow
Androcles
The Ant and the Grasshopper
Pandora
Prometheus

Along with the tales of adventure may be classified Biblical and historical stories which are filled with action and excite



THE JAZZ SINGER IS
EQUIPPED WITH A CHEST
WHICH CAN BE RAISED
AND LOWERED AS SHE
SINGS. HER HANDS ARE
STRUNG TOGETHER SO
THAT A PULL ON THE
CENTRAL STRING DRAWS
THEM TOGETHER IN A
TYPICAL JAZZ POSITION.

PLATE XXXIX

MAKING MARIONETTES

the imagination. Contributing appreciably to the success of many puppet plays is the audience's previous knowledge of the dramatized stories. For this reason, Biblical and historical adventures are often very successful, as well as appropriate for special occasions. In the category of narrative may be listed:

King Arthur
Robin Hood
Robinson Crusoe
Treasure Island
Dick Whittington
Uncle Tom's Cabin
Pocahontas
The Prodigal Son
Joseph and His Brethren
David and Goliath

Dramatized versions of many of these stories are available for puppet use. If this is not true of the story which you have selected to present, it is simple and satisfying to adapt the story for your purpose. The common nursery rhymes, fairy tales, fables, and legends, as well as many adventure stories, are, of course, common property and may be freely adapted for presentation. However, many stories, especially those of recent publication, are copyrighted and may not be adapted or used in any way without the permission of the publishers, or without the payment of certain royalties.

WHAT TO DO

PLAYWRITING

In adapting a story for presentation by marionettes, the first step is to thoroughly acquaint yourself with the incidents of the story. Then select only those incidents which are most vital to the plot as a whole, or which lend themselves best to puppetry. Remember that a good puppet play must not be elaborate or too long, and that it is therefore usually necessary to cut rather severely, preserving only what is essential and amusing. But in cutting or eliminating entire sequences, bear in mind that the story must knit firmly together, offering a clear and intelligible whole. As well as eliminating incidents, you should also, to avoid confusion, exclude as many minor characters as possible.

Having determined the characters and action to be used, commence writing the dialogue, keeping it as simple as possible, and depending to a large extent on the pantomime which the marionettes will perform to explain the story. Marionettes should never be given long speeches; instead, dialogue should pass in a natural conversational manner from character to character, to preserve life and interest in the production. The play should begin on as active a note as possible in order to at once gain the attention and sympathy of the audience. Important dialogue should be postponed until the play has progressed slightly, to give the audience an opportunity to accustom themselves to the puppets and the sound of their voices. And the play should end, too, on the same active note, allowing no interest let-down until the curtains have closed. At all times avoid the mechanical and unessential in the dialogue of your

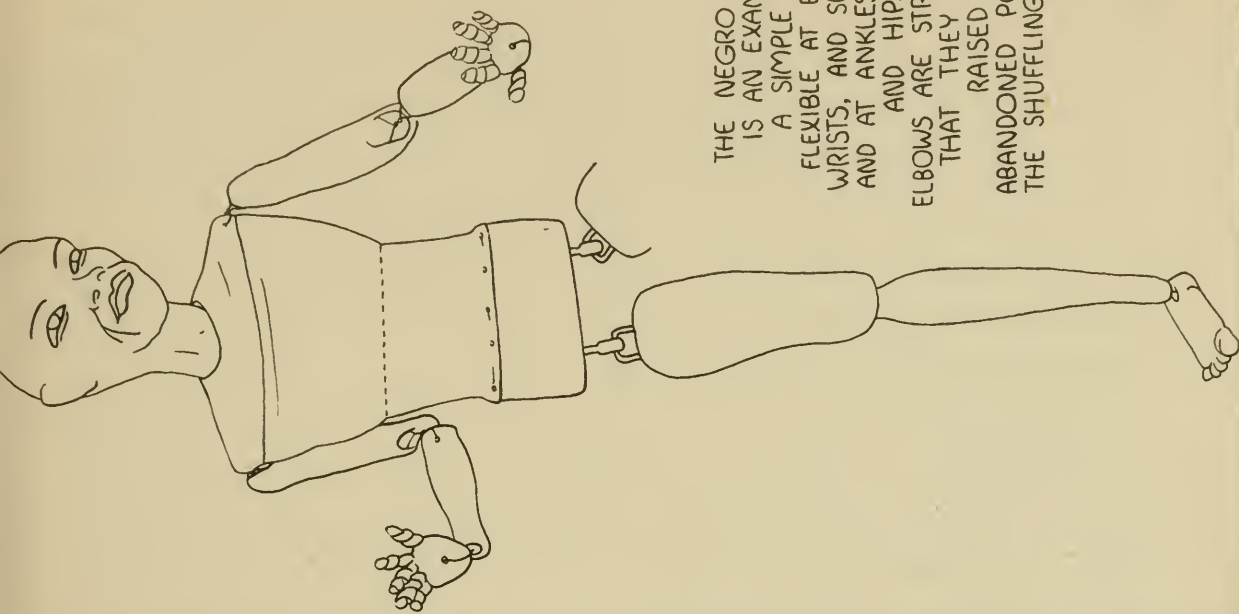
MAKING MARIONETTES

play, striving to make the action progress at a rapid pace, retaining at all times the interest of your audience.

The fundamentals of the successful marionette play are also the fundamentals of a successful marionette vaudeville act. Action and interest should be maintained and never allowed, even for a moment, to drag. If the puppet is dancing, he should not describe a routine long enough for it to become monotonous. If the puppet is juggling, he should move from feat to feat enthusiastically, saving his most difficult performance for the very last. The audience should at all times be made to anticipate what he is going to do next. If the puppet is singing, his pantomime and gestures should actually make the voice and words of only secondary importance.

The presentation of a puppet show can commence with a certain ritual, similar to that of beating the drum at the beginning of ancient puppet performances. A drum may be beat, a gong rung thrice, or a musical prologue similar to that of a music box or hurdy-gurdy, played. The audience will thus be brought to attention, and the curtains may open. If the performance is a play, or series of short plays, the action will commence at once. If, however, the performance is a series of vaudeville sketches, it is generally advisable to have a master of ceremonies—a clown, a formally attired gentleman, or a comic of some sort—present on the stage when the curtain rises, to greet the audience and announce the acts. Even though programs are provided, it will provide a desirable unity to the entire performance to have a master of ceremonies who knows just how much to say without tiring his audience.

The time between acts or scenes should be reduced to the



THE NEGRO DANCER
IS AN EXAMPLE OF
A SIMPLE PUPPET,
FLEXIBLE AT ELBOWS,
WRISTS, AND SHOULDERS
AND AT ANKLES, KNEES,
AND HIPS. HIS
ELBOWS ARE STRUNG SO
THAT THEY CAN BE
RAISED IN THE
ABANDONED POSE OF
THE SHUFFLING NEGRO
DANCER.

MAKING MARIONETTES

very minimum, in order that the audience need not endure long, tiring pauses which detract immeasurably from the success of a performance. Similarly, awkward pauses should be avoided within the acts themselves or the entire illusion may be destroyed or the tempo seriously retarded.

The puppet possesses endless potentialities. His fine abilities should be exploited to the fullest extent by the routine which he performs.

Chapter Fourteen

IT'S FUN TO BE FOOLED

IN WRITING a puppet play or planning an evening of marionette vaudeville entertainment, you will readily discover that special puppets possessed of unique capabilities are necessary. At once your ingenuity as a puppeteer is called upon in order that you may construct a figure exactly suitable for the part. Perhaps Alice's neck must grow to enormous proportions; perhaps Rumpelstiltskin must split in two; perhaps a rose tree must grow from an apparently empty pot. All such marvelous feats are possible to the marionette, and may be executed in a manner which will actually baffle the audience.

The performance of these magical achievements depends entirely upon the manner in which the figures or properties are constructed, and upon the adroitness of the puppeteer manipulating the strings. Since each trick puppet is different to fit the requirements of the performance, the puppeteer must experiment until the proper effect is achieved with the minimum possibility of tangling.

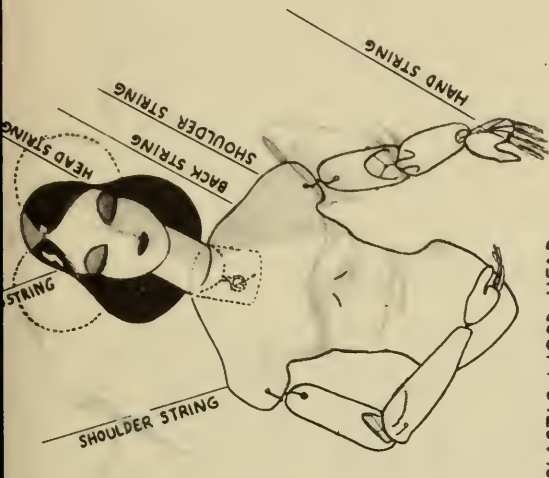
When a ghost, grotesque spirit, or fairy is to appear from seemingly nowhere, it is possible to construct a figure consisting of no more than a hand at each end of a string, with a flat head in the middle. From this string suspends a gauzy, triangular piece of cloth which gives indefinite shape to the figure

MAKING MARIONETTES

when it is suspended. This figure may then be placed flatly on the floor before the act starts, and when the apparition is to appear, it may be suddenly raised by the head and arm strings. The effect is surprising and amusing.

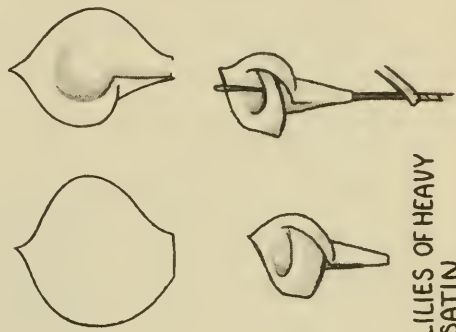
Puppets that are required to play musical instruments—pipes, horns, mouth-organs, etc.—are equipped with small wire loops at their mouths. Then the instrument which is in the hand of the figure is manipulated by a string which runs from the musical piece, through the mouth loop, and up to the control. When the character plays upon the instrument, a pull on the instrument string raises the piece to the lips of the marionette. Release of the tension on the string allows the piece to again fall in a natural position at the marionette's side.

When marionettes' heads, arms, or other limbs are to fly off, apparently entirely separate from the body, and a moment later snap back into position, the magical limbs must be constructed entirely separate from the body. The various limbs are then held in place merely by the strings. For instance, if the head is to fly off the shoulders, it will be a separate piece, with a hole running from the base of the neck to the top of the head. This head is then strung on a string from the shoulder to the control. The head itself will be equipped with strings at the ears. Then when the head is to fly into mid-air, these ear strings will be suddenly pulled, only to be released when the head is to reappear on the shoulders. Naturally, with such an arrangement extreme care must be used in operating the head while it rests on the shoulders, for any vigorous tug will send the head inches above the shoulders. A variation of this ruse is possible for Alice when her neck grows, or for the skeleton which crumples



PLASTIC WOOD HEAD,
WOODEN BODY IN ONE
PIECE BUILT-UP WITH
PLASTIC WOOD, WIRE
JOINTED ARMS.

- A. WIRE-FINGERED HAND
B. EACH FINGER GLOVED
C. THUMB AND HAND
COVERED, SEAM IN PALM
D. WRIST LOOSELY BOUND



LILIES OF HEAVY
SATIN

FASHION PUPPET

ESPECIALLY NOTE EXAGGERATED
PROPORTIONS CONFORMING TO
FASHION FIGURE, WHICH IS
TALL AND SLENDER. FACIAL
FEATURES ARE CONVENTIONALIZED
AND IMAGINATIVELY COLORED.

SATIN BODICE IS SEWED
TIGHTLY ONTO BODY; LONG
TRAIN DRAPES FROM WIRE
HALO.

PLATE XLI

MAKING MARIONETTES

into a disjoined mass and then miraculously again takes form, or for Rumpelstiltskin when he flies apart in rage.

When characters are changed from poverty to riches by the mere touch of a fairy wand or by the rubbing of a magic lamp, the simplest method of achieving an effect is to have the character standing on the stage in rags before the character or object which will bring about the transformation. At the touch of the wand, the lights are instantly dimmed, and in the very brief moment of darkness, the ragged puppet replaced by one similar except in dress. The trick is apparent to the audience, but the puppeteer does not risk entangling his figure by having a series of trick strings which will bring into view gorgeous raiment before the very eyes of the audience. Often such transformations can be made to occur just outside the vision range of the audience, so that a poor puppet will disappear behind some object, and the rich puppet appear on the other side.

A dancing puppet may be made to perform in an amazingly animated manner if he is equipped with two strings from the front of the chest to the main control. Manipulation of these strings permits the figure to lean backwards while he is dancing.

Another ruse, exceedingly simple and yet delightful to the audience, is that of having a puppet appear from behind a window, or climb through a window, or walk through a door arch. The audience knows that the strings from the figure must prevent the figure from walking through a doorway and yet—well—he is apparently doing the impossible. Such a trick is of course dependent on the construction of the scenery itself. The arch above the door, instead of being in one piece, is in two



THE DANCING TEAM, WITH THE PUPPETS JOINED TOGETHER BY THEIR CLOTH ARMS, IS OPERATED BY ONE CONTROL.

A. THE BAR OPERATING THE BACK STRINGS.

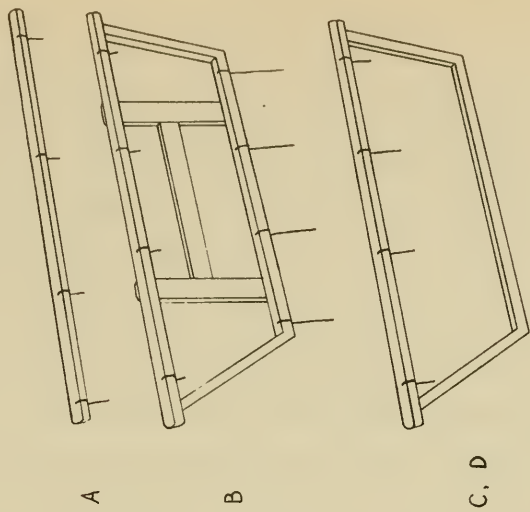
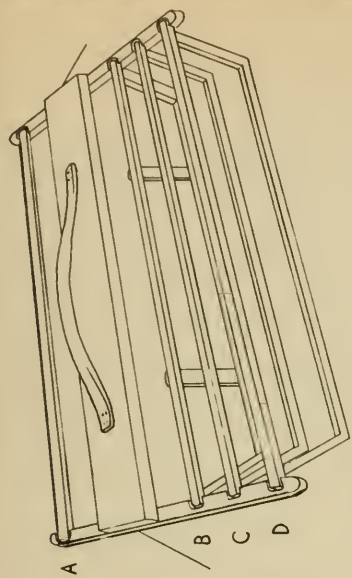
B. THE KNEE CONTROL BAR, WITH RIGHT KNEE STRINGS ON THE UPPER LEVEL, AND LEFT KNEE STRINGS ON THE LOWER.

C. THE BAR OPERATING THE RIGHT FEET.

D. THE BAR OPERATING THE LEFT FEET.

HEAD STRINGS AND THE TWO END ARM STRINGS ARE FASTENED TO THE MAIN BAR OF THE CONTROL.

PLATE XLII



A

B

C, D

MAKING MARIONETTES

overlapping pieces, staggered in such a manner that the strings are permitted passage through.

When rose trees are to grow and bloom out of an empty pot, the tree is, in reality, flat in the bottom of the vessel. As the plant sprouts, a single leaf appears. Then gradually the stalk grows—the stalk being a stout cord with leaves tied here and there. A bud, folded over the flower, is on the top of the stalk, although it seems no more than another leaf. When the flower is to appear, a string is pulled, freeing the gay bloom from the green bud which has enclosed it. The method seems so obvious to the puppeteer, and yet audiences are invariably baffled and charmed.

Again there are the puppets whose mouths move and whose chests heave as the figures sing. There are the marionettes rigged with pipes which may be brought to their mouths, as are the musical instruments described above.

Characters which must pick up and deposit baskets are equipped with hands curved in almost a hook position. The hand string is placed at the wrist rather than in the middle of the palm of the hand. The basket, or object to be picked up, has a handle narrow enough to be easily slipped onto the hook of the hand. When the marionette picks up the object, the figure is made to stoop and the hand slipped under the handle. The basket is deposited by reversal of this procedure. When puppets must appear holding certain properties, and then later appear without them, the objects are simply attached to the hands with rubber bands—attached or detached as the action requires.

Stage fires may be made to actually smoke if a tiny tube passes from the fire off the side of the stage. Someone backstage

IT'S FUN TO BE FOOLED

can then smoke a cigarette, puffing the smoke through the tube. Smoke will, of course, rise in delightful manner from the fire on the stage. Such fires may also be lit with tiny red lights which give a warm, convincing glow.

Sound effects, while not definitely in the category of tricks, must be considered for they add to the sparkle and finish of a performance. Sounds must be perfectly synchronized with the action on the stage. Obviously the puppets themselves are incapable of creating the sounds which should accompany their actions. When a tiny plate falls to the floor, the sound as it crashes on the floor must emerge from backstage. If puppet voices were in proportion to the figures themselves, the dialogue would be hardly discernible; so it is with the sounds which result from puppets' actions. Naturally the sounds for marionette shows should not be so thundering as to seem entirely out of proportion with the tiny figures, but yet, the audience should hear in order to be convinced.

The crash of broken glass or earthenware is made by filling a small sack with broken glass. The opening of the sack is tied tightly and the bag dropped just as the object on the stage falls.

The roll of thunder is created by shaking a large piece of sheet iron or tin. The effect of rain is accomplished by slowly rolling peas or beans in a small box. The flashing of lights on the stage, and the clever use of colored lights, together with the sounds indicated, create an excellent storm effect. Christmas snow, or bits of tissue paper shaken from above, simulate snow.

Your own ingenuity will enable you to create almost any stage effects required. That your efforts are rewarded will be evident from the genuine delight of your audience.

Chapter Fifteen

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

YOU HAVE NOW finished your first marionette and have begun to realize what a truly fascinating art puppet-making can be. The finished doll is, of course, nothing until he is on the stage, bowing and dancing and delighting an audience. Perhaps you can plan a vaudeville show or play using your first marionette. At least he will awaken you to the possibilities of puppets and to your own ability to create charming figures. Also he will probably make you anxious at once to form a troupe of marionettes of your own.

The following are three plays written especially for puppets. Perhaps one of these plays will fit the exact requirements of the troupe you will construct. The first is a simple folk tale requiring only four marionettes, each of which can easily be adapted to various other tales; the second is a fairy story offering free rein of the imagination in costumes, settings, and interpretation; the third is a series of incidents, each designed to display the charm and ability of marionettes.

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

THE LAD AND THE OGRE

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

written in collaboration with Ruth A. Rossbach

This is a puppet play which can be successfully presented by two, three, or four puppeteers, and requires both male and female voices.

CHARACTERS

BUTTERCUP, *a little boy*

HIS MOTHER, *a poor widow*

THE OGRE

MORIA, *a young girl, his kitchen slave*

ACT I

The kitchen of a peasant cottage. A table is in the center, with a crude stool on one side and a massive cupboard on the other. As the curtains open the MOTHER is humming a tune. She is working around her kitchen table, baking. She sings the words of the song while BUTTERCUP, sitting beside the table, watches, completely absorbed.

MOTHER.

Sing a song of sixpence, a pocketful of rye,
Four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie;
When the pie was opened the birds began to sing,
Wasn't that a dainty dish to set before the King?

BUTTER. Mama, did you ever bake a blackbird pie?

MOTHER. Well, dear heart, my darling little boy, not exactly

MAKING MARIONETTES

a pie of *blackbirds*, but before we became so poor I used to make pies of *blackberries*.

BUTTER. Well, I think I'd like blackberry pie better anyhow. Will you make one for me?

MOTHER. Oh, my! We couldn't be so extravagant now. We *used* to have pies, but that was long ago, when we celebrated the birthday of good Prince Hedvig. Oh! those were the days. We had great feasting, and the Prince sat at the head of the highest table with his lady by his side. And afterwards there was dancing. I wish you might have seen the ladies dance (*She curtsies.*)—all so grand and stately—and the silks and laces and jewels. And the men would bow so (*She bows.*) and the ladies would curtsy so (*She again curtsies.*) and then they would dance together. Oh, it was beautiful!

BUTTER (*excitedly jumping from the stool*). Did they dance like this? (*He dances about the room until he is almost exhausted.*) Why don't we do that now?

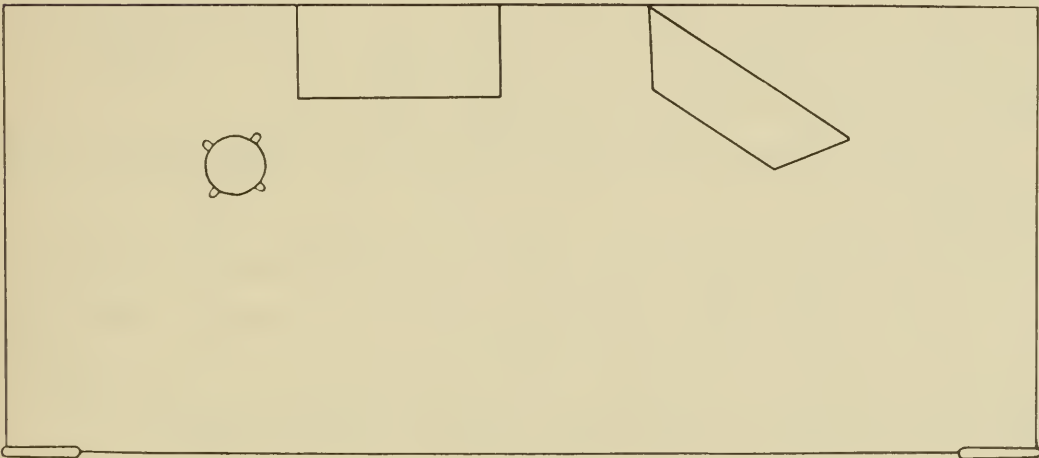
MOTHER. Well, you see, ever since Prince Hedvig has been off to the wars the people haven't felt much like dancing—and especially now that the Ogre has begun stealing our cattle, and they say he is even beginning to carry off little children. (*She has lowered her voice almost to a whisper.*) I tell you, people don't feel so gay. They just want to stay at home and be as safe as they can—even if they are all poor and have only enough for a small loaf of bread.

BUTTER. Yes, I s'pose so. But I think the pies sound lovely.

MOTHER. My darling, you don't look as if you needed any pies and pastries. You're as plump and round as a butter-ball. But never you fear. Someday the Ogre will be overcome and



ACT I THE LAD AND THE OGRE



MAKING MARIONETTES

we'll all be joyous again and the Prince will come home and there will be great feasting and rejoicing.

BUTTER (*eagerly*). And we'll have pies?

MOTHER. To be sure!

BUTTER. And maybe even cakes?

MOTHER. Of course!

BUTTER (*with decision*). Well then, I think I'd like to kill the Ogre!

MOTHER (*almost laughing*). Oh, my brave laddie, and what would you do? How would you go about it?

BUTTER (*his arms waving excitedly*). I'd take a big sword and cut off his head! Or else I'd dig a big pit and he would fall into it! And then everyone would come around and be glad—and then Prince Hedvig would make me a general and I'd ride off to the wars and . . . (*A dog barks crossly outside.*)

MOTHER. There's Rover barking again. Run outside, Buttercup, and see what he's barking at now. (BUTTERCUP *starts off to the left.*) I suppose it's another beggar. Well, we've nothing for him, I'm sure.

BUTTER (*frightened*). It's a great big man with shaggy hair and a big black sack on his back!

MOTHER. Heaven help us! It must be the Ogre! What shall we do?

BUTTER (*running to his MOTHER*). He's coming in here!

MOTHER. Oh, hide, Buttercup. Get up in the loft. No! There's no time for that! Here! Hide behind the cupboard and don't make a noise—not even the tiniest sound!

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

(The MOTHER returns to her baking, trying to assume an air of composure. The OGRE lumbers in from the left, a large sack over his back.)

OGRE (*gruffly*). Good day to you!

MOTHER. G-God bless you!

OGRE. Where's Buttercup? Isn't he at home today?

MOTHER. Now, isn't that too bad! He's out in the woods shooting ptarmigan for our dinner. Oh . . . uh . . . it's nice weather we're having for this time of the year, isn't it?

OGRE (*looking about the room*). Nice enough!

MOTHER (*nervously*). It's good for the garden. The flowers are coming along so fast.

OGRE (*still looking about*). Are they?

MOTHER (*hopefully*). Have you a garden?

OGRE. Garden! Foolishness! What would I do with a garden?

MOTHER. Why, grow things, of course.

OGRE. When will Buttercup be back?

MOTHER. He's gone for the whole day, I think.

(The OGRE approaches dangerously close to the cupboard, and the MOTHER grows more frightened than ever.)

OGRE. Hmph!

MOTHER. Er . . . won't you . . . wouldn't you like to sit down? If you will wait for a few minutes I'll have this loaf baked and you may have some of it before you go.

OGRE. Now plague take it! I wanted to see Buttercup. Well, I'll wait a bit. Perhaps he will come by the time the loaf is baked.

MOTHER (*startled, to herself*). Heaven forbid!

OGRE. What's that you said?

MAKING MARIONETTES

MOTHER. Oh, nothing. I just said, perhaps he would.

OGRE. Is that the loaf you're baking?

MOTHER. Y-Yes—it's almost done now.

OGRE. Done! It's not even started to bake yet. I'm bound I can't wait all day. (*Growls.*) I'll have to be off. Maybe Buttercup will be in the next day I call. (*He rises and is almost out the door when BUTTERCUP clumsily makes a dish rattle down from the cupboard. The OGRE turns abruptly.*) What's that?

MOTHER (*under her breath*). Heaven help us! (*To the OGRE.*) Oh—uh . . . that must be a mouse. We've been troubled with mice so much lately. Just the other day I was saying to Buttercup that if we don't get rid of these mice soon . . .

OGRE. What was that you said about a garden a little while ago?

MOTHER. Oh! Just that things are growing so nicely in this weather.

OGRE (*slyly*). Do you have vegetables as well as flowers?

MOTHER. Oh, yes. Wouldn't you like to come and see them? The cabbages are almost ready to cut. (*In her anxiety she almost pushes him out the door. But he remains steadfast.*)

OGRE. Do you think you could find me a ripe one?

MOTHER. Mercy, yes! I'm sure I can. Come right out here.

OGRE. I'll leave that to your judgment! You know more about gardens than I do.

MOTHER (*apprehensive*). Well . . . uh . . .

OGRE. Hurry now. It's getting late, methinks.

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

MOTHER (*reluctantly leaving, muttering*). Sit down a minute and I'll get you one.

OGRE (*He seats himself as the MOTHER disappears off the right. Cunningly*). It's too bad Buttercup wasn't here, for I had such a nice little silver knife I wanted to give him.

BUTTER (*Appears from behind the cupboard, unable to resist this temptation*). Pip pip! Here I am!

OGRE. Aha! My eyes and limbs! You're home early from shooting ptarmigan.

BUTTER. I wasn't shooting ptarmigan. Where's the silver knife? Is it real silver? Will it cut? Show it to me.

OGRE. Not so fast there! I'm so old and stiff in the back, you must creep into the bag and fetch it out for yourself.

BUTTER (*almost climbing onto the OGRE's knee to look into the sack*). In here?

OGRE. Reach down in. It is away down in the bottom. Do you feel it yet?

BUTTER. I'm almost touching the bottom now.

OGRE. Whoops then, over you go! (*as BUTTERCUP falls head-first into the sack*).

BUTTER. Let go! Put me down! Let me go!

OGRE (*rising hurriedly*). Aha, laddie! There's nothing to fear! (*The OGRE leaves hastily, with BUTTERCUP over his shoulder. In a moment the MOTHER re-enters from the right, a large cabbage in her hand. She is talking before she enters the kitchen.*)

MOTHER. Here's a fine cabbage for you. I'm sure you will enjoy it. You'd better put it on to cook as soon as you can. (*She sees the empty room.*) Why, he's gone! Buttercup! But-

MAKING MARIONETTES

tercup! Oh, Heaven help me! The Ogre has taken him! (*Sobbing, she falls onto the stool, her head resting on the table.*)

QUICK CURTAIN

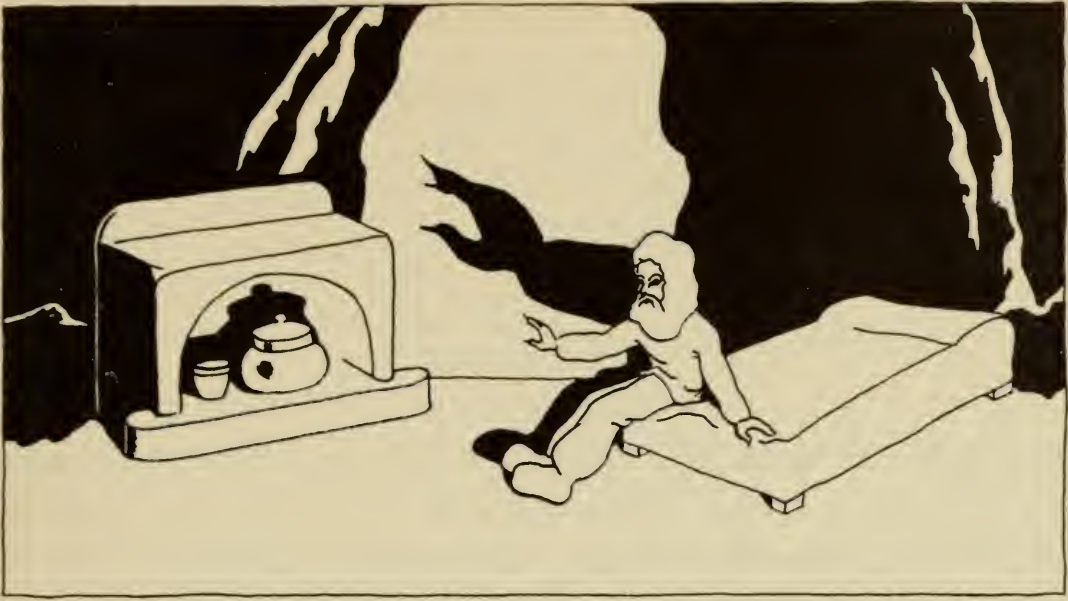
ACT II

The OGRE's cavern. A large open stove is at the left, and a clumsy couch at the right. Black shadows turn the room into a frightening pattern of dark and light. MORIA is working about the room. She seats herself for a moment on the edge of the couch.

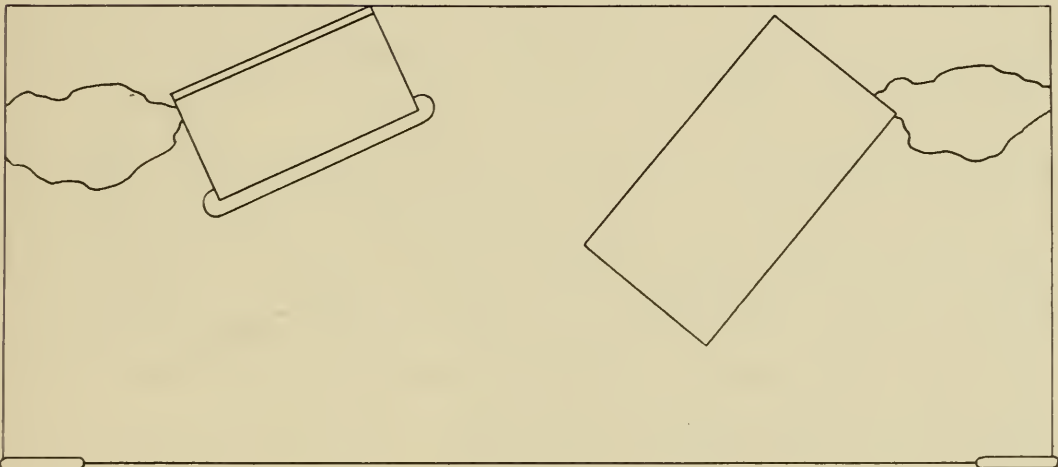
MORIA. Oh, dear. I am so tired. I would just like to sit here and rest for a minute. (*Getting up.*) But I must hurry and get this room tidy before the Ogre comes home. And then I'll have to get the dinner ready. I wonder what he is bringing home tonight. Ever since he captured me I have had to work so hard, and lately he has been bringing home such awful things. Here he comes now. Horrors! He's bringing a little boy. Oh, how dreadful! I *can't* cook *him* up. I'll run and hide.

(*Enter the OGRE with BUTTERCUP over his back.*)

OGRE. I'm glad to be at home where I can set you down. You're a heavy load to be carrying around. But you'll make me a fine juicy stew. A nice morsel for my dinner. Cabbages indeed! I haven't eaten cabbages for years. I like stews better. Here you are now. I'll tie you up to the foot of my couch. I'll make sure that you won't get loose. (*Stooping over, tying a rope to the boy's leg and to the foot of the couch.*) There now, you're safe enough. I'll call Moria. She'll attend to you.



ACT II THE LAD AND THE OGRE



MAKING MARIONETTES

There's the big black kettle waiting. (*The boy watches, wide-eyed with terror, while the OGRE lumbers or dances about the room chanting wickedly.*)

The kettle, the kettle,
Why, what is it for?
For just one thing—
To cook you!

My eyes and limbs! How tired I am! I must be getting old. I'll just rest a while before Moria starts to cook you. (*The OGRE lies on the couch, and is soon snoring loudly.*)

BUTTER (*softly*). This is dreadful. I must get away. I'll have to get loose some way. I'll work on these ropes. (*He tugs at the heavy knots.*) Oh, here they come. They're getting looser and looser. I must be very quiet. If I can only reach the door now and get past this couch without waking the Ogre. (*He is free, and leaving on tiptoe.*) I'll be out in a . . .

OGRE (*He wakes suddenly and sits bolt upright on the couch. His voice fairly thunders*). Not so fast, my lad, not so fast! So this is your game, is it? You are too impatient to wait while I sleep, are you? Well, I'll soon put a stop to that. I'll cook you right now. Moria can do it while I am out inviting the guests. (*Shouting.*) We'll have a feast here this evening. (*The OGRE ties BUTTERCUP again.*) Now you'll stay tied until Moria comes. (*Calling to the right.*) Moria! Moria! Come and get this dinner on. There will be guests tonight. See that everything is ready by the time I get home. (*The OGRE exits, muttering the chant.*)

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

(MORIA enters, peering around to see that the OGRE has gone.)

MORIA (*looking at BUTTERCUP*). Are you the dinner?

BUTTER. I guess I'm supposed to be. But you won't cook me, will you?

MORIA. I have to get the dinner and do as the Ogre says. I don't see how I can help cooking you.

BUTTER. Do you always do everything the Ogre says?

MORIA. I have to, or else he will beat me.

BUTTER. Why don't you run away? I am sure I wouldn't stay here if I weren't tied up.

MORIA. I have tried running away, but the Ogre always finds me again and brings me back. And he is always much more dreadful after I try to escape.

BUTTER (*resourcefully*). Maybe we could both go.

MORIA. Oh, no!

BUTTER. If you'll help me, I am sure we can find some way. Untie me, will you?

MORIA. I am afraid to. I really must fix the dinner. If he comes home and finds us gone, he'll catch us and probably cook us both.

BUTTER. Then we must not try to escape. We must *kill* the Ogre first.

MORIA. *Kill* the Ogre! Oh, do you think we could? What would you do? How could we do it?

BUTTER. Well, let me think. Oh, I know. Don't you think this would work? (*He is whispering in her ear as the curtains close.*)

CURTAIN

MAKING MARIONETTES

ACT III

Same as Act II. Two heavy caldrons are on the stove, one with a heavy rope from its lid to an unseen rafter above.

MORIA and BUTTERCUP are talking excitedly.

BUTTER. Is everything ready now?

MORIA. I can't think of anything else. Oh, are you sure that the rope will work?

BUTTER. I'm as sure as sure can be. It is very simple. It will just *have* to work.

MORIA. But what if it shouldn't?

BUTTER. Don't think about that. It will work. You see, here is one end of the rope tied to the lid of this kettle. Then the rope goes over the rafter and the other end is tied to a big stone. The stone is balancing on the rafter now, but as soon as the Ogre lifts the lid of the kettle to stir up the soup, the rock will fall down on his head and kill him. To reach the kettle he will have to stand just under the rafter where the stone is balanced. The only thing is that he might notice the rope.

MORIA. I don't think you will have to worry about that. He will be so hungry when he comes in, and so eager to see the food that he won't even notice the rope, or if he does, he will jerk it to see what it is for, and that will be just what we want anyhow. Oh, I hope it will work. And then we can take all the gold and go away.

BUTTER. Gold, did you say? What gold?

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

MORIA. Didn't you know? The Ogre has great stacks of it down in his counting room.

BUTTER. Then we will be rich! And the Ogre will be dead! Oh, how wonderful! But have you fixed your part of the plan?

MORIA. Oh, yes. You see in that other kettle—the one on this side of the stove, I put an old boot. You can smell it cooking now. I had to use the boot. There was nothing I could find except that.

BUTTER. That will be all right. Just so there is something in the kettle.

MORIA. It must be boiling now. Shall we look?

BUTTER. Don't go near the stove. The stone might fall. Stay over in this part of the room.

MORIA. Listen! Did you hear that?

BUTTER. No. What was it?

MORIA. I think it is the Ogre coming back. Hurry and hide.

BUTTER. I'll go out here. (*He pauses before leaving.*) Remember, don't go near the stove. Let the Ogre stir up the things. Be careful and say just what I told you to say.

MORIA. I will. I'll remember. Only hurry, please, and hide. (*She almost pushes BUTTERCUP out of sight at the right.*)

(*Enter the OGRE from the left.*)

OGRE. My eyes and limbs! What a smell of Christian blood there is in here. (*The child backs away from him.*) Well, Moria, is everything ready?

MORIA. Yes, sir . . . that is . . . it is cooking now.

OGRE. The guests will soon be here. You had better stir up the soup. Be sure it is done well.

MAKING MARIONETTES

MORIA. I have stirred it and stirred it, and it is almost done. But I didn't know how much seasoning you would want in it today so I thought I would wait until you came and tasted it, so you could tell me what it needs.

OGRE. Of all things! Well, all right. I'll do it now. Bring me a spoon.

MORIA (*nervously*). There is a spoon right over there beside the kettle.

OGRE (*He walks over to the kettle and tastes the soup.*). This is queer-tasting soup.

MORIA (*anxiously*). Maybe it needs more pepper. How is the other?

OGRE. In this copper kettle? (*As he lifts the lid, the rock falls on his shaggy head. He crumples on the floor.*)

MORIA. Ohhh! (*Staring at the OGRE spread before her.*) Buttercup! It worked! It worked! He's dead—the Ogre's dead!

BUTTER (*running in*). He is! He is! We're free again.

MORIA. We're free! We're free!

(*The two are dancing joyously when the MOTHER enters.*)

BUTTERCUP *falls into her open arms.*)

MOTHER. Buttercup! Safe!

BUTTER. Oh, mama. The Ogre's dead. We killed him. He won't trouble anybody any more.

MOTHER. Dear heart, my darling little boy!

BUTTER. Now can we have our blackberry pie?

SLOW CURTAIN

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

THE PRINCE WITHOUT A TONGUE

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

“The Prince Without a Tongue” can be presented either by mixed groups or by organizations composed only of young women.

CHARACTERS

ESTRA, *a young princess*

MARIE, *her guardian*

THE PRINCE OF SELESTIA

HERALD

WITCH

THE GRAVEN BIRD

THE DRAGON

THE CHICK OF THE GRAVEN BIRD

Courtiers and slaves

ACT I

The courtyard of the castle of Evanestra. Decorative iron gates protect steps leading to the massive edifice. A small leaded window, with brilliant stained panes, contrasts with gray castle walls.

(A long, lank, caricature of a woman beats her hands furiously on the iron grilling of the castle gate.) Estra! Estra!
(She calls shrilly. The starry ESTRA glides down the steps and, in a manner both coy and bashful, leans over the rail.)

MAKING MARIONETTES

ESTRA. Yes, Marie?

MARIE (*thundering*). Open this gate at once!

ESTRA (*still meekly*). Yes, Marie. (*As she reaches the lock she tips back her head gaily and cries,*) NO, Marie! (*and scampers lightly up the steps into the castle. The woman crumples dramatically, sobbing loudly.*)

MARIE. Estra! Child! Since I could hold you in one tender hand I've cared for you. (*Sobs again.*) And the Prince arriving to offer his hand in marriage (*Sobs.*) and you lock me . . . (*It fades into more wailing.*) . . . and I've gathered the rarest flowers for your hair and . . . (*Suddenly furious.*)

ESTRA! Open this gate at once! (*But there is no response. Resourcefully the woman examines the wall for a foothold, and finally decides upon the gate grilling as most pregnable. She mounts with a gingeriness surprising in one of her years. As she poises awkwardly on the top, a trumpet fanfare sounds not far distant. She jerks back.*) THE PRINCE! (*she cries explosively, and falls in a ruffled heap inside the gate. She scrambles to her feet and scampers up the steps and into the castle.*)

(*She has hardly made her pellmell exit before there seems to float on the breeze a gentle melody played on muted instruments. Only a moment can this be heard. A tiny Nubian HERALD enters, decked with jewels and bearing a glittering casket. As he pauses before the gate a mighty fanfare, announcing the entrance of a suitor, blows.*)

HERALD. The Prince of Selestia! Noblest of warriors, gentlest of men! (*In one gliding movement the PRINCE enters and kneels. He is slim and graceful, beautiful in satin accented with jewels and ribbons. Forming the points of a triangle be-*



ACT I THE PRINCE WITHOUT A TONGUE



MAKING MARIONETTES

hind him are two identical Nubians, their necks almost unable to support their enormous head-dresses. The PRINCESS ESTRA, MARIE, and a few modest attendants appear and take formal positions in the now open gateway.)

HERALD. The humble Prince brings gifts to the most lovely Star of Estra. (*The PRINCE bows and steps aside while, with much ceremony, his slaves present the gifts. Jewel caskets and magic flowers are placed at ESTRA's feet. She is an ecstatic child among the lavish gifts, and squeals delightedly at the presents and the exaggerated gestures of the Nubians. When the royal gifts have been presented, the PRINCE kneels, with his two slaves behind him. The HERALD speaks quietly, yet regally.*)

HERALD. The Prince of Selestia, with the humbleness of slave before master, begs the hand of the gracious Star of Estra in marriage. His small tokens are as feebly expressive of his love's greatness as a peacock's claw expresses the beauty of that dazzling creature.

MARIE (*sharply*). Let the Prince speak for himself!

HERALD (*after a moment of hesitation*). A thousand blushes. . . . The Prince . . . has . . . lost his tongue.

MARIE. A Prince without a tongue! A husband without a tongue! Preposterous! Ridiculously impossible!

ESTRA (*reprovingly*). Marie! He's my betrothed . . . I accept . . .

MARIE. Betrothed? To a Prince without a tongue? Fie on such an unhappy fortune. The match is finished. Estra! (*Pushing her inside the gate.*) Ridiculous! (*The gates clang closed.*) Indeed! (*Her muttering is heard until she, with ESTRA and*

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

the attendants, has disappeared inside the castle. The PRINCE is grief-stricken. As the gates close, he rushes to the grilling, and, hands gripping the iron swirls, he looks toward the castle, vainly attempting to call the name of "Estra!" His retinue retreats and disappears. For a long moment the PRINCE stands clutching the gate. Then he turns sadly. Quietly the upper casement opens, and ESTRA appears.)

ESTRA. Prince! (*She calls softly.*) Prince of Selestia . . . my betrothed. (*He turns, unbelieving. Instantly he is on his knees beneath her window. With a sweeping movement of his arm he expresses that everything he possesses is hers.*) Yes (*She calls.*), my betrothed. . . . If you will do but one deed. (*"Anything!" he tries to force from his lips.*) FIND YOUR TONGUE! (*For a moment he stares at her. Nodding his head, he rises to hurry away, anxious to begin his quest. But he returns to bow once more at her feet before he leaves.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE I

A witch's cavern. A large caldron and the humped figure of the WITCH are all that is visible in the black shadows. (The ugly creature is droning a chant as she performs a strange ritual about the glowing caldron.)

WITCH. One has come with two to do, .
Three to see what four can five,

MAKING MARIONETTES

Six to seven, the witches' seven,
Eight makes nine with toads alive,

Nine is ten when . . . (*A bell tinkles.*)

M-m-mm. A visitor! A wench, let's hope, who comes to sell her soul! (*Calls.*) Open the latch, turn twice, and come in! (*In a moment the PRINCE enters, staring about the dank cavern.*) A youth, eh? And a Prince, eh? Aha-a-a! Speak! Who are you and what is your mission? (*A pause.*) Don't be timid before an old hag! (*The PRINCE points to his mouth and shakes his head.*) No tongue? Aha-a-a! A Prince without a tongue! How very sad. No tinkling words to woo the lovely Princess! That's your mission, I'll wager. (*The PRINCE nods vigorously.*) And what do you offer if I help you find your tongue? (*The PRINCE brings forth a jewel.*) A jewel, eh? It's false! (*The PRINCE shakes his head.*) It's false, I say! Give me more! More! More! (*The PRINCE brings forth an even larger stone.*) Aha-a-a! (*Delighted.*) It's false! Give me more! One more! (*Finally the PRINCE brings forth a glowing ruby. The hag can hardly contain herself.*) And now, your tongue! A Prince without a tongue! Ha, ha, ha! (*She dances evilly around the caldron, chanting,*)

One has come, a Prince's tongue,
Two to do, a Princess woo,
Three to see, the Graven Tree,
Four can five, a tongue alive,
Six to seven, the witches' seven!

A Prince, a tongue, a Graven Tree!

Your tongue is alive and calling to you from the base of the Graven Tree. The Graven Bird from the Graven Tree has



ACT II, SCENE I THE PRINCE WITHOUT A TONGUE



MAKING MARIONETTES

come to take you there. Twirl thrice! (*She counts as he twirls.*) One! Two! Three! (*The PRINCE falls in a crumpled heap at her feet.*) Aha-a-a!

Graven Bird from the Graven Tree,

Take the Prince where his tongue may be!

(*A purple bird with magenta throat and vulture-like beak swoops down and grips the PRINCE in her talons, and flies away. The hag looks up, laughing.*) Farewell! Prince without a tongue! Ha, ha, ha! A meal for the Dragon of the Graven Tree!

CURTAIN

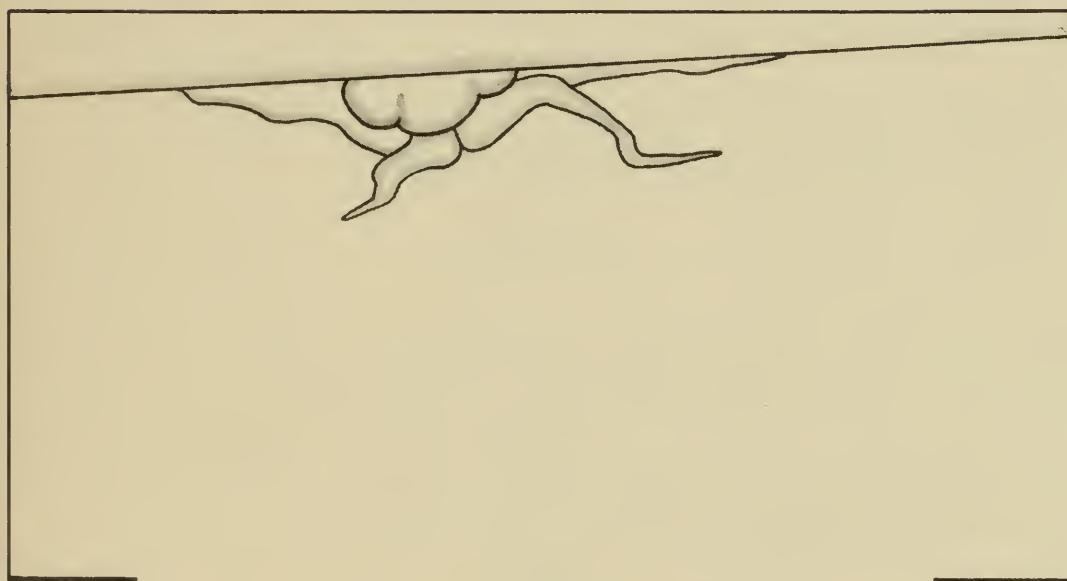
SCENE II

At the base of the Graven Tree. The gnarled roots of the Graven Tree dominate the scene, their very writhing forms suggesting danger.

(*From above there is heard a loud flapping, and the GRAVEN BIRD swoops down, still clutching the limp form of the PRINCE in her talons. She deposits him at the foot of the Tree, and sits on a rooty ledge, cocking her head interestedly from side to side as she watches him regain consciousness. He raises his head, looks about, and finally gets on his feet. The bird, her mission done, cackles, and darts off. For a moment the PRINCE is confused, but as his mind clears, he realizes his mission and joyfully approaches the Tree, looking at it from all sides, and finally pausing, hands on hips, to decide what steps to take next. As he pauses, a thin little voice from the heart of the Tree says,*)



ACT II, SCENE 2 THE PRINCE WITHOUT A TONGUE



MAKING MARIONETTES

VOICE. I am your tongue, in the heart of the Tree.

Find the hollow where I may be!

Hasten before the Dragon awakes!

(The PRINCE approaches with vigor and commences to climb the thick trunk, finding easy footholds. No sooner is he well off the ground than a great lashing and ugly growling are heard. He turns to see a monster DRAGON. Furious, the beast seems about to snatch the youth in its great jaws. But the PRINCE leaps from the tree trunk, drawing his heavy sword. A terrific struggle ensues. Finally, with a mighty lash of its tail, the monster knocks the PRINCE senseless. Then it backs up, smacking its great lips in anticipation of its new-won delicacy. Having awaited her opportunity, the GRAVEN BIRD swoops to the ground. She snatches the youth from before the gloating monster. The DRAGON is furious. It rises high, snatching at the bird who has stolen its prey. But its groans and snappings are vain. The GRAVEN BIRD has escaped with the PRINCE. The tongue still calls.)

VOICE. I am your tongue, in the heart of the Tree.

Find the hollow where I may be!

CURTAIN

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

ACT III

SCENE I

The same as Act II, Scene I.

(The WITCH is again moving about the cauldron, uttering a weird chant.)

WITCH. Leg of toad and heart of hen,
Scramble and bake and mix again.
Hair snatched from the Gorgon's toe,
Entwined with . . . *(The bell tinkles.)* Another
visitor! A day! A profitable day! Seven is the witches' seven!
Open the latch, turn twice, and come in! *(The PRINCESS timidly approaches.)* A maid! A wench! To sell her soul, I'll
wager!

ESTRA. Oh, no!

WITCH. No soul to sell? What then?

ESTRA. I . . . I came to . . . to . . .

WITCH. Yes! Speak up, you little dotard. You're trembling!
(She cackles in derision.)

ESTRA *(bravely, almost defiantly)*. I'm searching for my
betrothed. He's . . . he's seeking his tongue. I, like a foolish
child, sent him.

WITCH. We-l-l?

ESTRA. I want to find him—to tell him he need search no
longer. I'll not have him in peril for the sake of a tongue.
He can have me, whether or not.

WITCH. You've thought it over, eh? You'd like a husband

MAKING MARIONETTES

without a tongue? (*She cackles.*) You think your snapping little tongue will do for both, eh?

ESTRA. Oh, no! It's only that . . . (*She pauses, terrified as the whir of wings is again heard. The GRAVEN BIRD swoops down and deposits the PRINCE at the WITCH's feet. Realizing the preciousness of the bird's burden, both PRINCESS and WITCH rush to the PRINCE's side.*)

WITCH (*delighted*). Ah-h-h! You brought him back! Snatched him from the Dragon's claws, I'll wager. Look at the scars! Aha-a-a!

ESTRA (*almost frantic*). What's happened? What's happened to him?

WITCH (*ignoring the PRINCESS, and speaking to the ugly bird*). You've done well! Come and get a snack! A nice juicy quarter! (*She exits with the bird. The PRINCESS is trying to revive her PRINCE when the WITCH returns.*)

ESTRA. He's still breathing! Get some water! We must revive him!

WITCH. Revive him, eh? And for what? He's my slave now. Were it not for the Graven Bird his bones would even now be parching in the sun.

ESTRA (*repelled*). Oh, no!

WITCH. Yes! And he's my slave now, I say. By every law of witchcraft.

ESTRA (*almost sobbing*). He's . . . my betrothed. We're to be married. . . .

WITCH. Ha, ha, ha! (*She cackles.*) What will you give me?

ESTRA. Here, my birthday jewels!

WITCH (*gloating*). They're false. More! Give me more!

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

ESTRA. My . . . my mother's ring. (*She sobs.*)

WITCH. It's false, I say. Give me more!

ESTRA. It's all I . . .

WITCH. More! Only one more!

ESTRA (*reluctantly bringing forth a final jewel*). His gift! The jewel he gave me. (*The WITCH snatches it from the PRINCESS' hand.*)

WITCH. And now! (*Instantly the WITCH is feverishly active, moving about the caldron and brewing a horrible potion.*)

Leg of toad for Princely brow,
Heart of hen, the Princess now,
Hair snatched from the Gorgon's toe
And feather from a crimson crow;
Brew within the witches' brew,

Toad and hen forever true! (*Dipping her hand in the strange mixture, she twirls and stands with arm extended over the PRINCE.*)

ESTRA. Stop! Wait! Don't let him know that I helped him! I'll meet him outside the gate, as though I were just . . . (*Her voice fades as she flees from the room.*)

(*The PRINCE is regaining consciousness, and rises dizzily. As though awakening from a ghastly dream, he rubs his eyes.*)

WITCH. You tried and failed! Your tongue still lies, crying, in the Tree. Ha, ha, ha . . . (*The PRINCE gestures wildly.*) You would go back to try again. Well? What will you give me? (*The PRINCE produces a last jewel, which is completely dazzling.*) Aha-a-a! (*Snatching the jewel, she cackles wildly.*) It's false, it's dazzlingly false. But since it's all you have . . .

MAKING MARIONETTES

(*She claps her hands. The GRAVEN BIRD appears. The PRINCE again twirls as the WITCH counts.*) One! Two! Three! (*The PRINCE falls to the ground and is carried off by the bird. The WITCH returns to her caldron, eying her newest jewel and cackling over its beauty. The PRINCESS runs in.*)

ESTRA. Oh, I couldn't wait any longer. Where is he? Where . . . What have you done with him?

WITCH (*grinning*). What have *I* done with him? Indeed! He has returned for his tongue. 'Twas his own doing!

ESTRA (*She sobs.*). Oh, no!

WITCH. Sobbing like a dotard! You sent him, why don't you help him?

ESTRA. Oh, I will. . . . Yes . . . (*The WITCH claps her hands evilly.*)

WITCH. The Chick of the Graven Bird! (*Almost instantly a smaller but very similar bird appears.*) Turn thrice! (*The PRINCESS turns, falls, and is snatched away by the bird.*) But remember (*looking where the bird has disappeared*), if you fail to win the tongue, you are *both* my slaves forever! Ha, ha, ha!

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The same as Act II, Scene II.

(*The PRINCE is again deposited at the foot of the Graven Tree by the ugly fowl, who flaps away to her perch above. The PRINCE quickly revives, and is at once clambering up the tree. The tongue still faintly calls.*)

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

VOICE. I am your tongue, in the heart of the Tree.

Find the hollow where I may be!

Hasten before the Dragon awakes!

(From a hollow the PRINCE snatches his tongue, and holds it wonderingly in his hand. While he holds it, the tongue calls nervously.)

VOICE. Hasten before the Dragon awakes!

PRINCE *(thrusting the tongue into his mouth)*. My tongue! I can speak! I can sing! *(He jumps joyfully to the roots below, commencing to sing gaily and to try his voice. At once the DRAGON rushes forth. Again a terrific combat ensues! The PRINCE is buoyed up with the success of his quest, and the combat is consequently more evenly matched. When the fighting is at its thickest, the PRINCESS is almost dropped in their midst by the tired CHICK. The DRAGON is startled and, for a brief moment, turns his head. In that instant the PRINCE thrusts his sword to the DRAGON's heart. With an agonized groan the creature rolls on his back, dead. The PRINCESS rushes to her PRINCE, and they embrace at the foot of the Graven Tree.)*

PRINCE. The Prince has found his tongue!

ESTRA. And the Princess has found her betrothed!

(As the curtains close, the gentle melody, played on muted instruments, is again wafted on the breeze.)

CURTAIN

MAKING MARIONETTES

MISSISSIPPI ROVER

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS, SEVEN SCENES

"Mississippi Rover" is a unique marionette play in that it has been written especially for presentation by young men's organizations and therefore requires only male voices. Advanced hobby classes and summer camp groups will find the "Mississippi Rover" a most interesting and stimulating project, demanding clever puppet manipulation and stage management, and offering in return valuable experience in advanced puppetry.

CHARACTERS

A NEGRO, *a genial old fellow*

LUM, *a young country boy*

PATEET, *a French poodle*

BECKER, *proprietor of a small traveling circus*

SLINKY, *a trained seal*

A CUB PILOT

AN OLD NEGRO

TWO NEGRO BOYS and a BABY, *his grandchildren*

A SALESMAN

AN ITALIAN *puppet-master*

DANLO, *his mule*

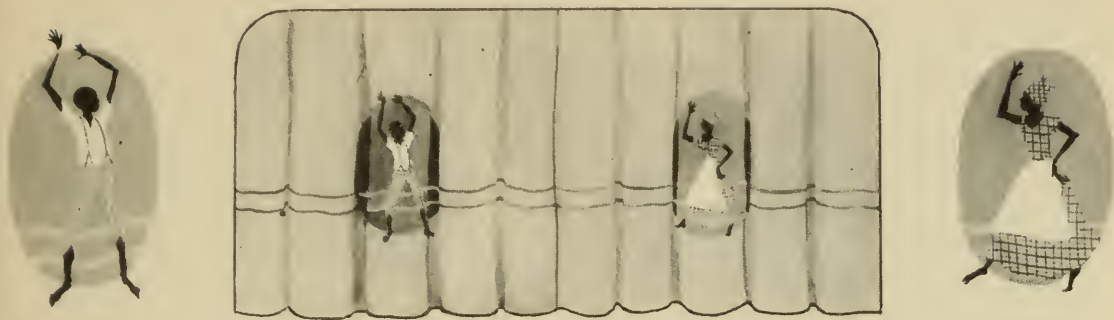
BILL, *a bull*

AN OLD FARMER

CHRIS, *Lum's brother*

Several Negro workmen, and two passengers—
an old gentleman and a young lady

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS



CURTAIN MOTIF FOR "MISSISSIPPI ROVER"

PLATE XLVIII

ACT I

SCENE I

It is morning on the main deck of the southbound "Mississippi Rover." All is in drowsy shadow. Freight is piled carelessly about the floor, rising in irregular peaks against the back and about the supporting timbers, which, at the top, are surmounted by elaborately carved woodwork suggestive of the gay and gaudy boiler deck above.

In the foreground, almost unperceivable in the shadows, so completely does he fit the mood of his surroundings, is a NEGRO stretched on a low bench, asleep. The lazy summer atmosphere is consummated by the rhythmic, monotonous, beat of the paddle wheel, and the languid splash of water.

(A shrill whistle sounds twice. The NEGRO stirs and stretches, only to again settle down to sleep. Suddenly a box clatters down from on top of the jumbled heap. The NEGRO starts nervously and looks about. Since all is again peace-

MAKING MARIONETTES

ful, he is about to resume his nap. Again a clattering noise rouses him. He springs to his feet and stares about. As the noises continue, he falls on his knees, terror-stricken, and prays.)

NEGRO. Oh, Lawdy! Lawdy! Save me, Lawdy! Ah ain't done nothin' to no one. Save me, Lawdy! (*All is quiet again and the NEGRO rises suspiciously. As the noises continue, he again falls to his knees.*) Save me, Lawdy! I'se a sinner, but save me! (*A hand appears, as of someone pushing through from under the boxes.*) Come out, you. You no spook. Come out, I say. If you ain't no spook, come out of dere. (*His voice lowers nervously.*) If you is a spook, oh, save me, Lawdy! (*A young BOY, shy and frightened, appears.*) Who is you, anyway? Why you'se only a white boy. What's de idee scarin' de wool off a poor ol' nigger. What you doin' here? Cap'n ain' goin' stan' for no stow'ways.

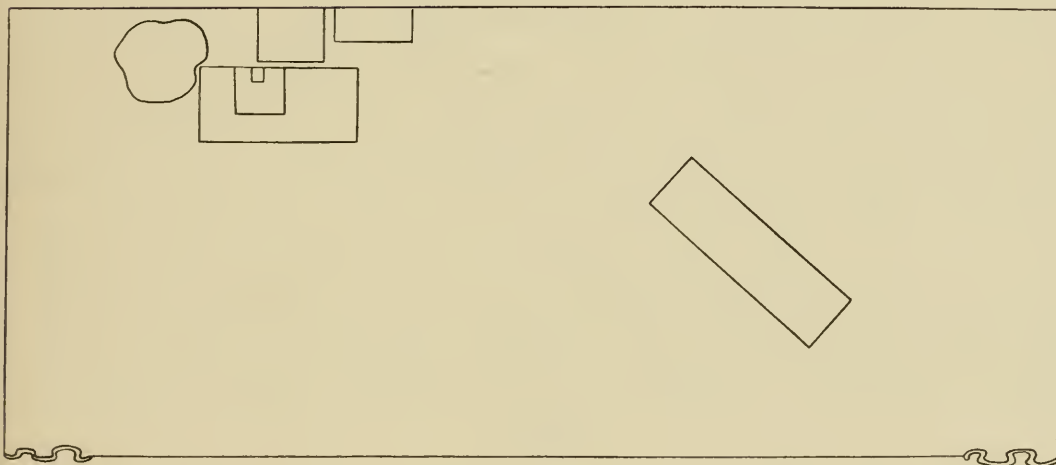
BOY. Don't hurt me, mister. Please. I didn't mean to scare you. The Capt'n won't hurt me, will he, mister? I'm awful hungry. I've got some coppers. Honest. Right here in my pocket. I can pay him something if he makes me . . . only . . .

NEGRO. Cap'n won' stan' for no stow'ways. No, sir! He don' want no trouble with their mammies and pappies. Las' spring a white boy—big as you—comes hides away jus' like you done and when his mammy finds out where her boy is she comes down to Cap'n and shouts aroun' and says she goin' to write to the Presceden and have Cap'n put in jail and . . .

BOY. I haven't no folks anyway, so I won't cause no trouble.



ACT I, SCENE I MISSISSIPPI ROVER



MAKING MARIONETTES

Can't you just let me hide here, mister? I won't do no harm.

NEGRO (*emphatically*). No, sir!

BOY. Please, mister. Won't you make the Capt'n let me stay?

NEGRO. What you wan' run away for anyhow, son? You'se too young to be workin' on any steamboat.

BOY. I don't want to work on a boat, mister. I'm looking for my brother. He's down South somewhere. We're twins. A man took my brother down South to live with him and I stayed North with my aunt. She's nice 'nuf, but my brother and me didn't never want to be parted. (*Hopefully.*) Would Capt'n let me stay if I played my 'monica for the people? I can play all the tunes.

NEGRO. Who wan's to hear some ol' white boy play a mouf-organ. Probly you can't even play nohow. What you play, sonny?

BOY. I can play anything . . . only . . . well, I play some better than others.

NEGRO. Play me one. An', son, you better be good, after scarin' this poor nigger. Play sumpin' with some life to it. None of that opree stuff. Just a plain jig. You know. (*The BOY plays, and the NEGRO sways to the gay lilt.*) Dat's some playin', son. Makes an old darky wish he was a youngster ag'in. Down on de plantation—how we danced. We had real music then bo. None of your ol' mouf-organ. Pappy played better'n any of dese ol' musicians on de showboats. I seen 'em all too, but none can 'pare with ol' pappy. Dat's a good tune, though, son—no matter how you plays it, would be good. Play it again wif more spirit. (*As the BOY plays, the old darky dances lazily, when suddenly a clipped French poodle comes stepping in*

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

on his hind legs. The BOY stops abruptly. His eyes dance with delight, for he has never before seen such a sight.)

BOY (*in open wonder*). Look, mister! He ain't real, is he, mister?

NEGRO. Course he real. He just a dog.

BOY. A dog! I never saw one like that before. (*Softly, almost as though afraid of offending the happy creature before him.*) Is something the matter with him? Poor thing! He'd be pretty, too—an' clever, walking on his hind legs thataway. Only a pity he got the mange so bad.

NEGRO (*scornfully*). Mange, son! Why, look here. Dat dog ain' got de mange. Don' you let his master hear you say he look mangy. He a French poodle.

BOY (*in wonder*). Does he grow that way?

NEGRO. For sure ain' you seen one before? Is you foolin' me like de other white boys?

BOY. Honest, mister.

NEGRO. All de circus dogs is dat way. Ain' you never seen the Floatin' Palace? They got lots ob dem. Course dey don' grow like that. They's clipped fancy with balls a fur here an' dere an' skinny parts everwhar else. (*The DOG has continued to dance proudly while the BOY watches, thoroughly elated. The BOY now pats the DOG timidly, almost in awe.*)

BOY. Why, you funny pooch, you. I'll bet you hate lookin' a sight. Cute, though, too. Feel him, mister. His fur is so soft and his other is so smooth like a mouse, only stiffer. Look at how he loves me.

NEGRO. Dat craze' ol' dog go make up with any stranger. No good for a watchdog. De trainer don' like him though.

MAKING MARIONETTES

He don' like any ob de animals. Don' like de whole business ob travelin' show an' all. I hear him say he wish he was back in Noo York. He sick ob de river and de country folk and de plantations. Dat no reason to take it out on his pets though, is it, son? De Lord don' want no one to be mean to his creatures. Parson back home, he wouldn' even hurt a fly—just let them be, excep' once I saw him go at one that near peskered him to death.

BOY. What's the pooch's name, mister?

NEGRO. Aw, some craze' thing. Ah . . . uh . . .

BOY. 'Tain't Star? Or Spot?

NEGRO. No. It don' start with szz. It's some old French name. You never heard it, son. Just to make peeple think he a won'ful dog comin' from cross de ocean. Pa . . . Pa . . . Start with Pa Ah think.

BOY. Prince? He looks like a prince, don't he?

NEGRO. Aw, no. 'Tain't no ordinary name like Prince. Pa . . . Pateet—dat's it.

BOY (*disappointed*). Pateet! Why, that's no real dog's name. Why, you poor old boy. Pateet! They trim you up funny and give you a crazy name and still you're nice and love everybody.

NEGRO. Dey even tie a big pink bow roun' his neck for performances. Cap'n even said—'nless he was foolin'—dat he saw Marse Becker brushin' de dog's teeth.

BOY. I'll bet they do. They're real white. Just like mine, only whiter. (*To DOG.*) Would you like to dance again? (*Strained.*) Pateet? Oh, that's crazy. I'll call you Pete. That's a good name. Come on, Pete. (*The BOY plays the mouth-organ*

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

and the DOG commences to dance again, when a loud, angry voice is heard.)

TRAINER. Pateet! (*Whistles.*) Where's that . . . Ah! Here you are. You roaming creature. All ready to practice up above and he goes stepping off when no one's looking. Wish I were through with the whole . . . (*The tall, rather well-dressed TRAINER is now on the stage, and he notices the BOY.*) Where'd the boy come from? Does he belong here on the boat?

NEGRO. No, Marse. I never see him before. He just rise out from back ob de barrels, and scare me near to death. I try to get a little nap. (*Guiltily.*)

TRAINER. A runaway scamp, eh?

NEGRO. I tell him he can' stay. Cap'n won' tol'rate any stow'-ways, I tol' him. But he say he lookin' for his brother down South and has to go.

BOY (*pleading*). I gotta get South, mister. Can't you make them let me stay? I won't harm anything. I'll just stay here quiet . . . an' . . . an' . . .

TRAINER. I've nothing to do with that, son. It isn't my boat. I'm only traveling on it.

BOY. But I can play the harmonica real good. (*To the NEGRO.*) Can't I, mister?

TRAINER. No one cares about a boy's harmonica. The place for you is at home, lad. This traveling game ain't as wonderful as most people—and boys especially—think. Those a-traveling want to be home, and I guess those at home would like to be traveling. Well, I've tried both and my advice is that you get home as quickly as you can.

BOY. But I gotta, mister. Honest I do.

MAKING MARIONETTES

TRAINER. Sure! You're like the rest. All right! Travel then! Up and down the river till you wish the blasted sun would dry it up. You'll have to work though, if you're with me. You can help me with my animals, if you really want to get South. You'll have to work though, son. And I'm not paying you anything. How does that suit you, or aren't you so willing to go if you have to work for it? Eh?

BOY. Oh, thank you, mister. I'll work awful hard, and I'll be good to the animals and they'll like me. I'll even give you my coppers . . . only . . .

TRAINER (*as he exits with PATEET*). Come on, then. But you have to work, and work hard. Last boy that helped me ran away the first day.

BOY (*hurrying after the TRAINER, as the curtain falls*). Oh, I'll work hard, sir. Thank you, mister.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The same as Act I, Scene I. The deck has recently been cleared of its cargo, and there still clings a strong odor of fur and hemp. Several forlorn crates are piled unevenly at the right, and a few lazy NEGROES loll with their heads in the patchy shade. The low murmuring of their soft, ingratiating voices, and almost shy attention, are always pleasantly in the background.

(The TRAINER enters from the left, followed by the NEGRO, LUM, and PATEET, forming a queer procession.)

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

NEGRO. Is you gonna practice out here?

TRAINER. It's as good as any place. I reckon anyone who saw the show knows it needs practicing. It's got to be awfully good, or it's no good at all. (*Turning.*) Where's the kid?

BOY. Here, mister.

TRAINER. Oh, I didn't . . . Well, better get Slinky out on deck. He doesn't need the practice so much as he needs a little recreation.

NEGRO (*sitting down*). Can I sit here, Marse?

TRAINER. Sure thing. But I reckon you'd better pull in those feet 'fore they get stepped on.

(LUM *pushes in a large crate, releases the door, and out flops SLINKY, a sleek seal. He flops over to the TRAINER eagerly, anticipating what is to take place.*)

NEGRO. Better look out he don' flop off the side, him and his slickness. Somethin'll happen.

TRAINER. Slinky? Nothing's going to happen to . . .

NEGRO. Sure 'nuf there is. A white horse on board is sure trouble, 'n' that's what's on the "Rover" this trip.

TRAINER. Well, nothing'll happen to Slinky . . . unless he dies of starvation.

BOY (*alarmed*). Honest, mister? Is he starving?

TRAINER (*laughing*). Well, not to death. But he don't get as much as he'd like. River business ain't been so good lately. Here. Better put the fish over here and we'll get started. (LUM *has brought out gaily colored balls and other paraphernalia for the act, which no one enjoys more than SLINKY. He catches a large ball on the end of his nose and balances it precariously. He awkwardly climbs a ladder and poises for a moment on*

MAKING MARIONETTES

the top rung. After each trick, a small fish is thrown to him which he gulps down, immediately clapping his flappers delightedly.)

BOY. Look at him eat! He sure is hungry, poor thing. I'll bet he is starving. (*The TRAINER laughs, knowing the constantly ravenous appetite of the shiny creature. The act proceeds, with the TRAINER muttering, "Thunderation!", when SLINKY misses and has to repeat. PATEET has been jealously watching the procedure, and finally whines and cries at the TRAINER'S heels.*)

TRAINER (*in an orotund voice*). The great Pateet wants to perform too, eh? Well! What do you want to do? Better get Slinky into his cage. (*The SEAL is lured to his cage by a temptingly dangled fish. The TRAINER starts the next act as though addressing a large audience.*) Well, Monsieur Pateet, what will it be? (*The DOG sits up and barks.*) What? Speak a little louder. (*PATEET barks again.*) Oh! Monsieur Pateet would show all the ladies and gentlemen how he jumps. Kindly pardon me while I prepare for this marvelous performance.

NEGRO (*in a confidential whisper*). Who he talkin' to? Ain't no people here 'cept those crippled hearse hosses.

BOY (*also whispering*). It's a practice.

(*The DOG has been cleverly walking on his hind legs behind the TRAINER as the man leaves, supposedly to make preparations. Turning, he sees the DOG. PATEET immediately sits.*)

TRAINER. So, Monsieur Pateet. You want to walk on your hind legs? All right, come on. (*The DOG doesn't budge, which of course is part of the act.*) Well! (*He mutters and turns*

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

his back to walk away. The DOG immediately is following on hind legs. The TRAINER turns abruptly, and the DOG as abruptly, sits, and will not budge in spite of all the TRAINER's pleading. Again the TRAINER turns and walks, and again the DOG contrarily rises and walks. This is delightfully repeated several times.) And now, ladies and gentlemen, this tiny creature will display his remarkable ability at jumping through a hoop held many feet above the ground. This is a feat which no other trained dog the size of Monsieur Pateet has ever achieved. One! Two! Three! *(He holds a hoop high and the DOG leaps through and lands in a crumpled heap. He whines pitifully, and LUM and the TRAINER rush over to him.)*

NEGRO (*peering over*). What's happened? Did he hurt himself?

TRAINER. Not much, thank heavens. He'll be all right in a little while I guess.

NEGRO. I tol' you there'd be trouble. Allus when there's a white horse on board dere's trouble.

TRAINER. Oh, thunderation with white horses! (*Turning discouragedly, yet gently, to LUM.*) Well, son, that's life in the show business. It might 'a' been a dern sight worse. And if it had, I'd of left the whole thing and gotten back to New York. It's what I should do anyway. (*The DOG gets up and moves about rather slowly and hesitantly, but proving that he is all right.*) Sure, the dog's all right. More scared than hurt. But I swear here and now, if anything ever happens to any of the animals, I pick up and leave—and glad of it.

BOY (*earnestly*). You'll take Pete with you, won't you?

TRAINER. No, son. When I get through, I'm going to be

MAKING MARIONETTES

through with it all. Somebody'll take the dog and be glad to have him. (*Turning.*) Well, let's call off the practice. Maybe we better wait till they get that derved white horse off. (*He exits.*)

BOY (*falling on his knees before the DOG*). Oh, Petey, ain't it a shame. Him so unhappy, and Slinky gettin' skinny, and you . . . you . . . gonna be given away maybe. . . .

CURTAIN

SCENE III

The sun is dazzlingly yellow on the smooth floor and white walls of the boiler deck, intensifying the gaudy colors of the elaborately carved and filigreed pickets and supports. Accordion music can be heard faintly.

(*A gaily ruffled young lady is listening to a whiskered gentleman recite as he points out the various sights seen from the boiler deck of the "Mississippi Rover." When she can no longer disguise her anxiety to be rid of him, she flutters up the stairs at the left. The old man hobbles determinedly after, his cane clicking on the steps, and his free hand successively grasping the stair-rail. His monotonous, ". . . the very place . . . where that old willow hangs into the water . . . the very place . . . there . . . see? . . . or was it down here? . . . no . . . Yes, down here . . . see? . . . where that rock . . ." grows fainter as LUM sneaks rather timidly on from the left, a long stringed-pole across his shoulder. He climbs to the*

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

rail and sits dangling his bare feet over the side. PATEET basks in the sun on the deck. LUM throws his fish-line into the water. Then a strapping young upstart of a CUB PILOT approaches cockily.)

CUB P. What's going on here?

BOY. Nothin'.

CUB P. Well, it looks like something to me. Who are you anyhow, and what are you doing up here? We hardly cater to tramps and river scum on the "Rover." Or do you by any chance think you're traveling on the "River Devil" that you brazenly come on the upper deck and stick out your dirty feet for everyone to see!

BOY. I'm sorry, mister. Only I wanted to catch some fish for Slinky, and they laugh at me down below. He's hungry and I thought some fish would make him feel better and . . .

CUB P. Don't we have enough trouble with vendors selling their derved cheap jewelry and catch-penny trinkets on board without having circus riffraff catching food for their animals on the upper deck? What's the river coming to? Now get down and scoot!

BOY. I'm gettin'.

CUB P. Someone should 'a' learned you your place. (*The CUB PILOT's anger is not easily allayed, and he moves to roughly hasten the lad from the rail. PETE growls. Just as the CUB PILOT is jostling the BOY by the shoulders, the TRAINER appears, his eyes ablaze.*)

TRAINER. What's going on? The kid hasn't hurt anything?

CUB P. He hasn't, hasn't he? What kind of a boat do you

MAKING MARIONETTES

think we're running with river tramps sunning themselves for the passengers to see?

TRAINER. The kid don't know any better. He's green from the country. He hasn't learned about "class"—about the white trash and the Negroes, the dealers and farmers, the gentlemen and ladies, and finally (*His voice rises.*), sitting like the Lord of all Creation on top of the social pile, some aig-sucking *Cub Pilot*!

CUB P. Aig-sucking, eh? I'll show you who's aig-sucking. (*The men clench their fists, their eyes glaring.*)

TRAINER. Don't worry. I'm not hittin' no kid.

CUB P. Kid, am I? An aig-sucking kid? (*He hits the TRAINER a dazing blow. The TRAINER is furious and the two are soon exchanging thrusts. LUM trembles on the side lines, busy restraining PETE. The frightened BOY tries to intercept with.*)

BOY. Mister Becker! Please don't . . . (*but they thrust him aside. BECKER falls to the floor and LUM is at once at his side. The CUB PILOT stands sneeringly, his legs wide-spread.*)

CUB P. An aig-sucking kid, eh?

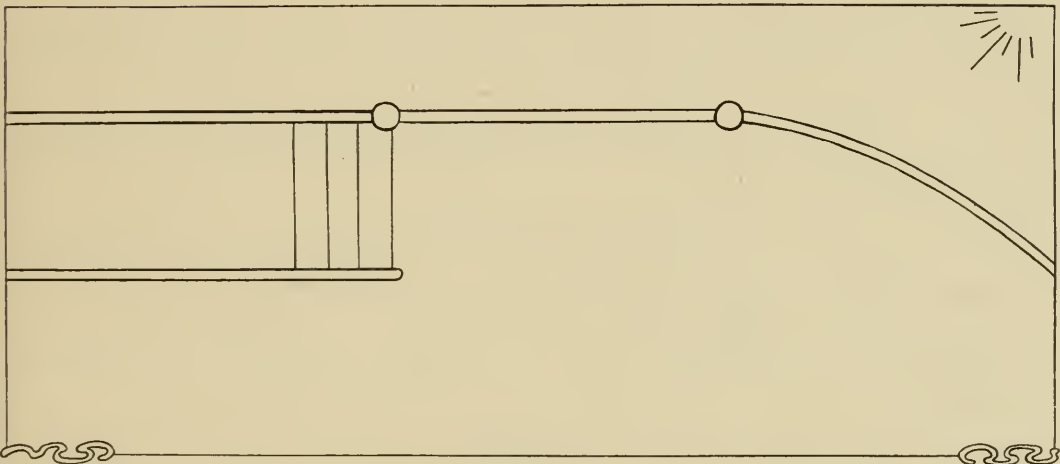
TRAINER (*rising, more furious than ever*). Yes! An aig-sucking kid, and a derved low-luggin' bully. (*With that the blows recommence. LUM runs frantically to the rail, and turns.*)

BOY. Stop! If it's me you're fightin' cause of, stop! I don't want to cause no one no trouble. (*The men stare dazedly, their arms hanging loosely, wide from their bodies. LUM jumps, and a splash is heard as he falls into the river. The men stand, stunned for a moment. With one leap PATEET is also over the rail. Both men rush to the boat's side.*)

TRAINER. Look at the kid swim. And the dog after him.



ACT 1, SCENE 3 MISSISSIPPI ROVER



MAKING MARIONETTES

CUB P. (*reluctantly, and almost stammeringly*). He's a great kid . . . and I'm a derved . . . aig-sucking baby.

TRAINER. We're both just plum fools.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE I

A few minutes later. A poor Negro cabin is built at the river's edge. Beside the dwelling is a large log which has been smoothed off, serving as a bench on which sits an elderly NEGRO MAN, with tiny pickaninny grandchild on his knee. Two gangling BOYS in tattered, loose-fitting garments loll comfortably on the ground listening to the OLD MAN.

OLD MAN. An' dey went ma'chin' erroun' an' erroun' de city, wid colo'ed banners flyin'. An' dey ma'ched an' ma'ched seven times blowin' on de trumpets an' all a sudden de whole walls wen' . . .

LUM (*entering, wet and bedraggled, followed by PATEET*). 'Scuse me.

OLD MAN (*startled*). Oh! Why, chil'! Yo' close is all wet. Did you fall in de riber?

LUM. No, I . . . well, yes, I guess I did kinda fall off that boat way down there.

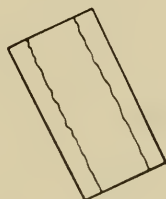
OLD MAN. Yo' po' mammy mus' be scared mos' to death.

LUM. Haven't any.

OLD MAN (*kindly*). Oh . . . Whar' you goin'? You an' dat dog?



ACT II, SCENE I MISSISSIPPI ROVER



MAKING MARIONETTES

LUM. That's Pete. Him and me's pals. Only Pete, he ain't really mine. We're going farther South to find my brother..

OLD MAN. Bless yo' soul, sonny. I'se hopin' yo' gets dere an' fin's him. Yo' bettah stah in de sun 'til yo' close is dry. Play wid de boys. Dey gits lonesome times wid no one to play wid. Der mammy she wo'ks ovah yondah daytimes, an' Ah'm not much comp'ny fu' no one.

1ST N. BOY (*eagerly*). Will ya?

LUM. Sure thing! Only, well . . . what shall we do? I got my 'monica.

1ST N. B. We can be a band, huh, gran'pappy?

OLD MAN. Yes, chil'! A real edicated band. Stir yo' stumps an' make some sweet music. (*The three boys parade with exaggerated movements. LUM plays his harmonica, and is followed by the two NEGRO BOYS shouting for the drums, making all the gestures which they have seen the colored band perform. While the children play, the OLD MAN nods, and the baby crawls from his knee and disappears off the right, followed by the anxious PATEET. The GRANDFATHER is asleep and the children are too busy to notice. They have marched around the entire stage. The COLORED BOYS delightedly run up to the OLD MAN for his approval.*)

1ST N. B. Grandpappy! Uzn't dat lak de edicated band?

OLD MAN (*rousing himself*). Eh? Eh?

1ST N. B. Uzn't dat lak de edicated band?

OLD MAN. Co'se, chil'. Real melojous. Best Ah evah hyeah'd. (*He misses the baby.*) Wha's de baby? Wha's Linny?

1ST N. B. Don' know.

2ND N. B. Don' know either.

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

OLD MAN (*rising, nervous and alarmed*). Wha's de baby? Linny! Linny! (*They all start the search, the OLD MAN mumbling, "Lawse, I'se an old fool!", and all calling, "Linny!", and one saying, "She not hyeah!", and another, "She not in de cabin." Suddenly LUM runs to the right, pointing excitedly.*)

LUM. Look! Look, mister! It's Pete! Look! (*The DOG comes, dragging the baby by its dress which is dripping wet. The OLD MAN snatches up the infant, hugging it and crying, swaying back and forth.*)

OLD MAN. Chil'! Chil'! Wha' you go? Oh, chil'! If Ah'd evah lost yo'. (*Finally he looks at LUM.*) Huh close is all drippin'. She musta clum right to de watah. Sonny! Yo' dog saved Linny's life. Ah'll nevah fu'git wat he don'. 'Scuse me for cryin'. My mouf cain't say what Ah feels. (*The NEGRO CHILDREN are staring at PATEET in awe.*)

LUM. Gee, Pete, you're a real hero.

OLD MAN. He is, chil'. Sary'll want to thank yo'. Yo' an him bettah stay hyeah tonight, or long as you lak, 'fore yo' heads South. We cain't nevah thank you 'nough.

LUM. Oh, thank you, mister. We can only stay tonight though. And then I'll have to get headin' South again to find my brother. (*The NEGRO BOYS clap their hands, excited at the prospect of LUM's staying.*)

1ST N. B. An' we'll play de band some mo'. Boom! Boom! (*The two march in file again, while LUM and the OLD MAN look on, amazed at their so quickly revived spirits. They cannot but laugh as PATEET, on his hind legs, goes marching after as the curtains close.*)

MAKING MARIONETTES

SCENE II

A large cottonwood tree casts a refreshing pool of shade on the hummocked clay road. A rough-hewn fence, wandering tiredly along, leans for a moment against the tree, and continues on its uneven way. Pausing against this uncertain support is a tall, thin man, mopping his dripping forehead. His flashy checkered suit is crumpled and shiny from constant usage. At his feet is a vividly painted suitcase. An Indian head in an insignia, and white letters reading "LIVER" and "RED BLOOD," can be distinguished. (LUM approaches wearily, followed by an equally weary PA-TEET. The MAN speaks in a patronizing tone.)

SALESMAN (*smoothly*). Good morning, my little man.

LUM. Good mornin', sir.

SALES. A lovely day, my young friend. A lovely, lovely day. So quiet, so peaceful.

LUM. Yes, sir. (*He moves as though to continue on his way.*)

SALES. Not a sound, but only a faint jingle as you approached. Just the faintest jingle. A copper, maybe, in your pocket.

LUM. Oh, more than that, sir.

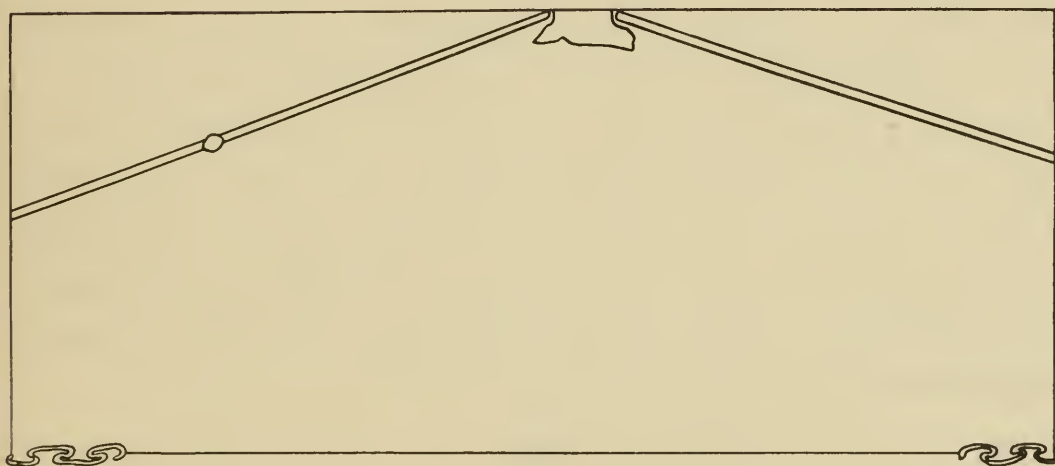
SALES. (*suddenly interested*). Eh? (*Resuming his former tone.*) Your poor, tired, little feet. Sit a minute and rest.

LUM. Oh, no, mister. I've gotta get South.

SALES. But what's one minute. You've a lifetime ahead. That's where we make our big mistake—hurrying all the time. Here (*He moves over.*), sit right here.



ACT II, SCENE 2 MISSISSIPPI ROVER



MAKING MARIONETTES

LUM. Oh, no, mister.

SALES. (*gently insistent*). That's a boy. R-i-g-h-t here! (LUM *sits at a safe distance*.) You're very tired, my young laddie. Just the tiniest little nap is what you need. You'd better just lie down in the shade and take the tiniest little nap.

LUM. Oh, no. I'm not sleepy. Honest.

SALES. Oh, yes, you're. I see what *you're* afraid of. You think someone might take your coppers. Well then. I'm your friend. I'll see that those coppers are safe. Just trust me. Now just the tiniest nap.

LUM. W-e-l-l. I am kinda sleepy. Only . . .

SALES. You make me very sad, my boy. So very sad. You distrust a man who would be your sincerest friend. (*As though sorely offended*.) So sad! So very sad!

LUM. Oh, honest, mister. I didn't mean to . . .

SALES. Now! Just the tiniest nap. And your coppers will be safe. And we'll just tie the dog to a tree so he won't run away. Eh? You wouldn't want to lose him, either. Eh, sonny? You're a fine young fellow.

LUM. Pete won't run away. We're pals, him and me. He's tired too.

(*The BOY and DOG rest on the ground beneath the tree, and the MAN patiently watches at a little distance.*)

SALES. (*calling softly, in a hushed voice*). Laddie! Asleep yet? Eh? Pete! Asleep too? Well then! (*He adroitly takes the coppers from LUM's pocket and retreats on tiptoe. Suddenly PATEET jumps up, barking furiously, and leaps at the seat of the MAN's trousers. Both fall in a crumpled heap, with the MAN shouting and the DOG growling.*)

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

LUM (*jumping up*). What's . . . what's the matter? Pete! Pete! Come here! That man's my friend. Pete!

SALES. Get off! Call the blasted creature! Get off, you! (*He regains his composure when LUM holds the DOG at a safe distance.*) Of course I'm your friend. I saw the coppers falling from your pocket and went to pick them up so you wouldn't lose them. And here they are. All safe and sound. One! Two! Three! That's all.

LUM. Oh, no, mister. I had five. Maybe they fell on the ground.

SALES. (*laughingly*). Oh, yes. Here they are. (*He hands them to the BOY.*) That's a fine dog. We three should be friends. Pete and . . . What was your name again?

LUM. Lum.

SALES. (*almost singing it*). Pete, and Lum, and, shall we say, Mr. Goodfriend. For I am your friend. Pete, and Lum, and Mr. Goodfriend! (*PATEET growls as his name is mentioned.*) And now, because I like you very much and want to prove that I *am* your friend, I'll tell you a secret. And a very good secret, too, my young fellow. How does that suit you? (*The BOY nods his head in anticipation.*) I'll tell you my secret formula. See this paper? On it is written the formula for the latest discovery of the scientific world—Dr. Snodiker's Root and Herb Remedy. When I tell you this, you'll be rich—the richest lad in the world. And I'll tell it to you . . . if you'll loan me those five poor coins.

LUM. Oh, no, mister.

SALES. Oh, yes, you should say. You don't want to turn down the greatest scientific discovery of the age. It cures

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rheumatism, lumbago, warts, baldness, indigestion—every ailment known to man. All you have to do is to take the formula and gather these roots and mix them as it says. People will pay a fortune for just a single, tiny drop. And you will be rich, lad. Then you can go South in fine shape. Eh? Is it a bargain?

LUM (*uncertain, but visualizing the formula as the solution, not only of every problem of the medical world, but of his own particular problem as well*). Well . . .

SALES. All right! Give me the coins and I'll give you this wonderful formula. (*The exchange is made.*) Well, I must be going, lad. It was a lucky day when you met me. Pete, and Lum, and Mr. Goodfriend. (*He sings as he exits with his suitcase, leaving LUM standing almost dazedly in the middle of the road.*)

LUM (*turning to the DOG*). Oh, Pete! We're rich. Now I'll find my brother and we'll be real pals. And I'll never, never forget Mr. Goodfriend. Oh, Pete, ain't it grand? (*He starts to put the folded paper into his pocket, and then suddenly thinks to look at it. He turns, almost in tears.*) Pete! Pete! It's an empty sheet of paper. Oh, Pete! And now we have no coppers or nothin'. Only an old sheet of paper. I'll never find my brother now. Oh, Pete!

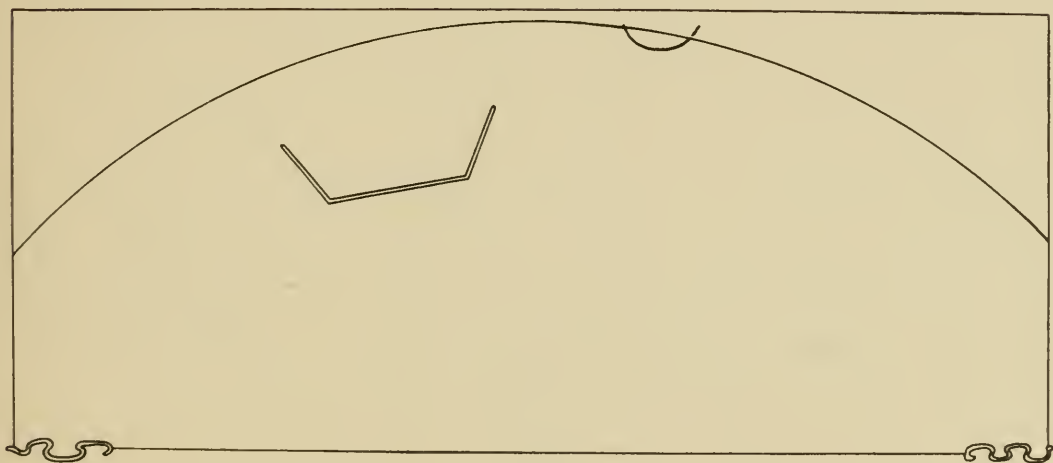
CURTAIN

SCENE III

An Italian itinerant has set up his puppet booth in a small clearing outside a town. His MULE is tied to a nearby



ACT II, SCENE 3 MISSISSIPPI ROVER



MAKING MARIONETTES

tree. The ITALIAN works about the booth, muttering to the animal and to the dolls which he loves so well.

ITALIAN. Santa Maria! I feela tired. Bad to be tired so mooch. You leetla bit tired too, Meester Ponch? Y-e-s! Ponch-i-nel-lo is leetla bit tired too. Tum-t-tum-tum! (*A spoken sigh.*) But it's w'at you calla granda ole game. Lets a man forgetta heemself an' be somethin' he nevva be bayfore—a Keeng, a poleecaman, a redda nos', hook-chinn Ponch! Hoho! Meester Ponch! How you lika dat? Meester Ponch-i-nel-lo! (*LUM has approached with PATEET, and both stare in amazed curiosity.*) Goodday! Leetla man. You too earla for da show. Com' back w'en ya' hear da drum. Com' an' see (*Gaily nodding his head.*) Ponch, and Judee, an' da babee an' da hangman an' all da leetla men an' weemen.

LUM. Golly, mister, can I see all that—free?

ITALIAN. Free? He dussna' know much, eh, Meester Ponch? Meester Ponch-i-nel-lo know bettra dan dat.

LUM. I had some coppers. Honest. Gospel truth. Only . . . well . . . a man borrowed them and so I ain't got them any more.

ITALIAN. I beleeve you, son. An evrayone should see Meester Ponch—mon' or no mon'. So you just halp me a leetla—an' ya' won' have to pay a seengla copper w'en da hat goes roun'. Fine dog ya gotta, too. Onlee he'll hav' to keepa way from ol' Danlo. Danlo's my faithfuless frand, but he nevar really car' mooch for dogs. Me an' old Danlo travel together. He theenka alla time. Good ol' Danlo! (*He pats the MULE, but the creature pays no attention. PATEET barks good-naturedly at DANLO and LUM restrains the DOG.*)

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

LUM (*apologetically*). He ain't a *cross* dog—honest, mister. Only he wants to play. He was in the circus with a pink bow on his neck. And they brushed his teeth most every day. And he likes to play.

ITALIAN. Sure. He's a nica dog. Only him an' Danlo, well . . . Danlo he don' wanna frisk aroun'. Tell ya sometheeng, my frand. Dogs are smart an' clever an' fun ta have aroun'—but for realla brains, take a mule ever' time. Danlo there, he's gotta mind of his own. (*Pausing, and looking about.*) Wal, I guess evratheeng ees feex. Here, my frand, ees Meester Ponch. (*The ITALIAN is now in his booth, and PUNCH, the hook-nosed rascal, is waving and bowing on the stage. The puppet is dressed in gaudy scarlet and yellow. LUM is utterly engrossed and amazed. He stands in open wonder.*)

PUNCH (*The ITALIAN, of course, talks for PUNCH and JUDY.*) Pray how you do, leetla genlaman!

LUM. H-hello.

PUNCH (*The puppet dances a little and then calls,*) Judy! Judy, my dear.

JUDY. Wal, Meester Ponch, what do you want?

PUNCH. I want you to meet a leetla genlaman. (*JUDY enters the stage of the puppet booth.*) Judy, my pretty Judy!

JUDY. (*As PUNCH kisses her she slaps him in the face.*) Take that!

PUNCH (*apologetically to LUM*). Don't minda her, leetla man. She's always so playful. There she goes, dear Judy. (*JUDY exits, only to return with a stick, hitting PUNCH on the back of the head. PUNCH and JUDY exit hurriedly as PUNCH wails loudly. The ITALIAN emerges from the stall.*)

MAKING MARIONETTES

LUM. Gee, mister. Are they real?

ITALIAN. Real? Shore. Real lad all mak' pretand theengs.

LUM. Are they honest midgets?

ITALIAN. Midgets. Hoho! They are my leetla children only they're made of wood and rags. My poppet children. An' I love them too, like a papa. They do what they're told to—mostly.

LUM. Can I see them—close?

ITALIAN. Eef you want. In a leetla while. Only now . . . is evratheeng ready? (*He stands back in the stall and counts the dolls.*) . . . two . . . t'ree . . . seexa. . . .

(*LUM is still holding PATEET. Suddenly the lazy MULE switches the flies off his back, which is too inviting for PATEET. He bolts from LUM's grasp, and barks good-naturedly at the old animal's heels. DANLO shies and circles slightly.*)

LUM. Pete! Come here! Pete! Pete!

ITALIAN (*running from the booth*). Queeka! Git heem away from Danlo!

(*But it is too late. The MULE's heels fly into the air and the flimsy booth clatters to the ground, its gay colors blurring as it falls in a shattered heap, knocking the ITALIAN into a sitting position.*)

ITALIAN. Santa Maria! You break me! Go way! You no come back! (*Shaking his fists.*) Geet! I am ruin'. Go on! Geet! Queeka! My poor Ponch, an' evratheeng! Oh, you break my children, you break me. (*He is still vigorously shaking his fists as the BOY and DOG guiltily and hastily exit.*) My leetla poppet children!

CURTAIN

THREE PLAYS FOR PUPPETS

SCENE IV

A few days later. A fence encloses a scrubby orchard, baking in the warm sun.

(LUM, with PATEET following behind, plods wearily along a narrow, dusty wagon path.)

LUM. Gee, Petey, I'm tired, aren't you? *(Turning.)* You poor thing. You're not used to hikin' along all day, only eatin' when you can find something. Let's sit a minute, huh? Looks like we're never going to find my brother. *(As he stoops to pet the DOG, he notices the orchard beyond the fence, and whistles in anticipation.)* Look at those apples! Shall we—borrow a couple? What do you say? *(LUM climbs the fence, and PATEET tries to wiggle under, but the slats are too close together.)* Oh, you poor fellow. *(And LUM gently reaches over and lifts the DOG to the orchard side of the fence. The two, their spirits already revived, rush to the tree, and LUM climbs onto a limb rather high from the ground. He throws a ripe piece of fruit to the DOG, who is sitting begging below.)* Catch it! *(The apple rolls on the uneven ground, and PATEET playfully bounds toward the left. Suddenly LUM looks off right, and shouts frantically.)* Pete! Pete! *(The DOG, sensing danger, rushes to the foot of the tree, and LUM grabs him from the ground into the tree with him, just as an enormous BULL, with a large ring in his nose, thunders to the very trunk of the tree. The BOY and DOG look fearfully below, as the large animal encircles the tree, letting out strange, ugly grunts. Almost immediately, an old FARMER, in faded overalls, comes limping*

MAKING MARIONETTES

after the BULL. The FARMER is doubled by amusement and rheumatism, and emits strange, squeaking laughs. His laughter turns to a coughing spell, which leaves him suddenly cross and irritable.)

FARMER. You git down ouden that apple tree, Chris.

LUM. I'm . . . I'm afeard to.

FARMER. O' what. You know ol' Bill ain't goin' to hurt you. You oughta know better'n get Bill all excited that way, Chris.

LUM. I didn't excite him, mister.

FARMER. Well, you knew that dog would.

LUM (*almost apologetically*). An' . . . An' . . . I'm not Chris.

FARMER (*hesitating a moment*). Quit your foolin' and git down ouden there before Marthie catches you at her best can-nin' apples.

LUM. You're sure he won't hurt me?

FARMER. Eh?

LUM. You're sure that—that bull won't hurt me?

FARMER. Go on, Bill, git movin'. (*He slaps the BULL, and the creature lazily meanders off.*) (*Turning rather serious attention to the boy.*) What's come over you, lad?

LUM. N-nothin'. We were . . .

FARMER. An' whose dog you got?

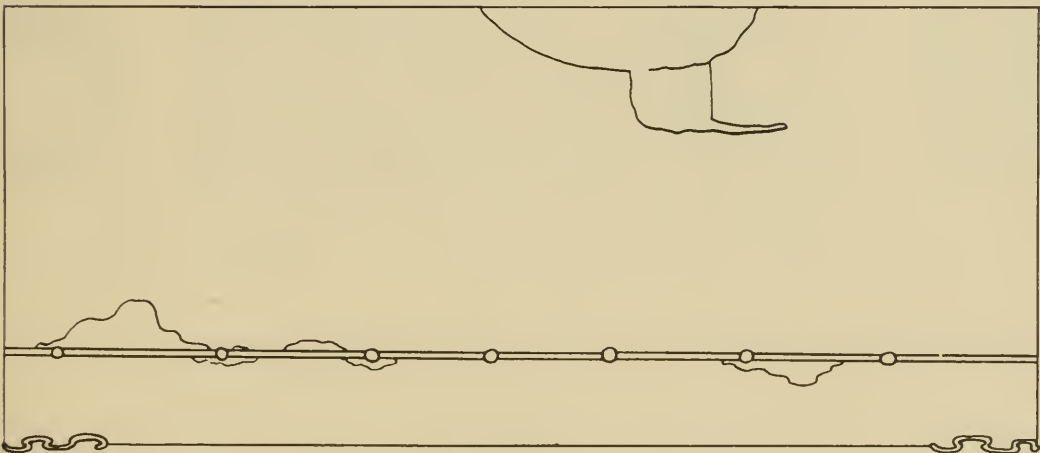
LUM. He's mine—almost. We were just hungry, and we thought you wouldn't mind . . . (*CHRIS, different from LUM only in his dress, comes skipping up to the OLD MAN.*)

CHRIS. What's the matter? Someone at the apple tree?

FARMER. Eh? (*The OLD MAN turns dazedly. LUM jumps from the tree with a joyous shout.*)



ACT II, SCENE 4 MISSISSIPPI ROVER



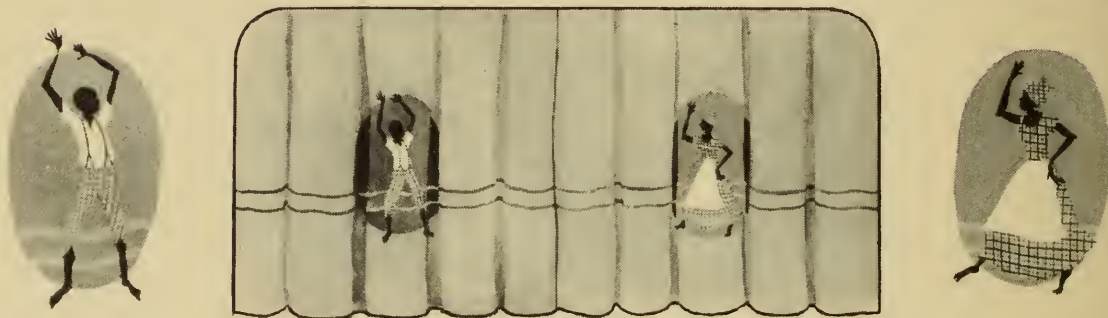
MAKING MARIONETTES

LUM. Chris! It's my brother, Chris!

CHRIS. Lum! What you doin' . . . (*The two BOYS run toward each other. PATEET races madly about the two and about the FARMER, who can only flutter his hands and stare at the pair before him. Finally, excited and happy, PATEET darts between the OLD MAN's legs. The FARMER collapses in a ridiculous heap. As the curtain falls, he is calling.*)

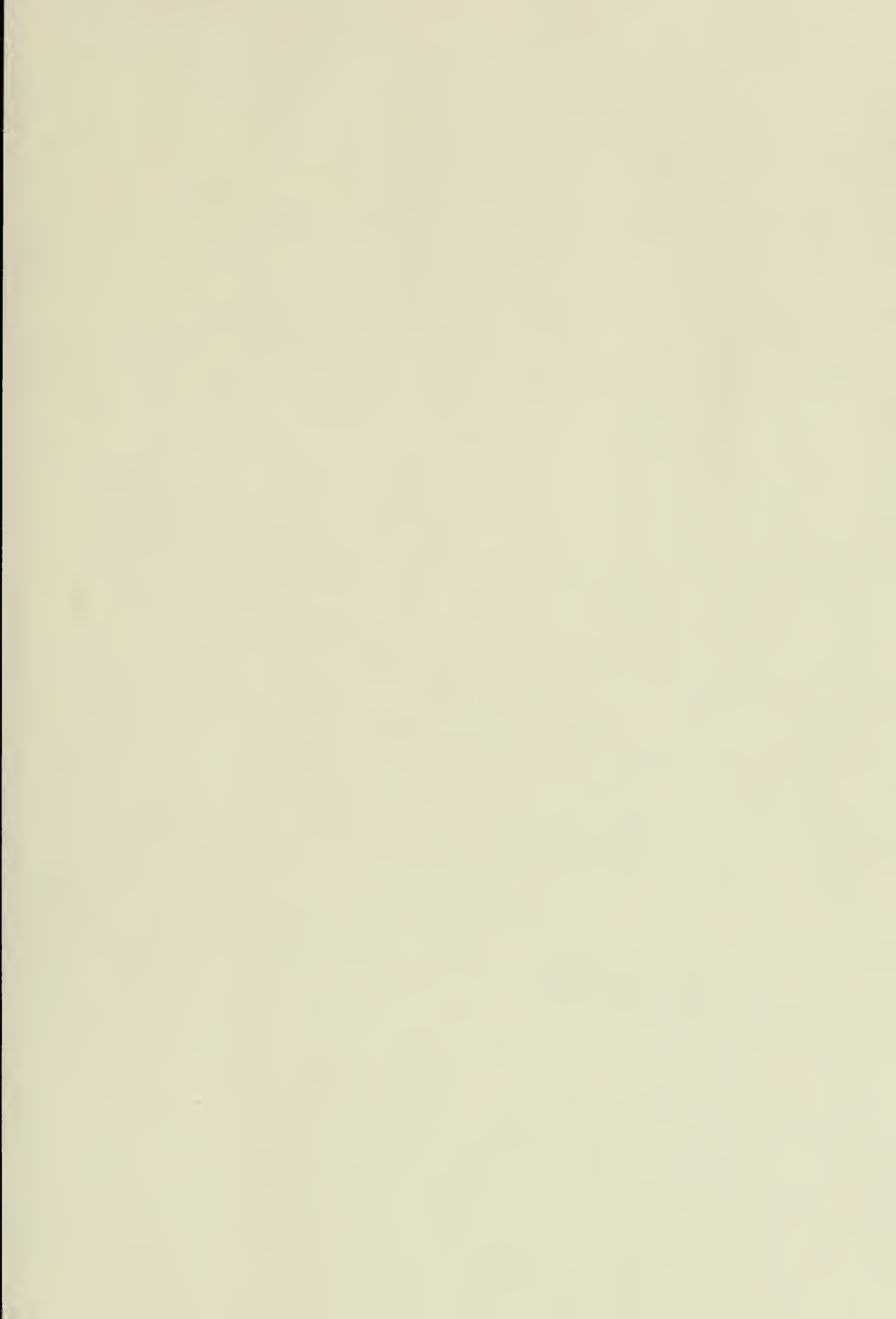
FARMER. C-call Marthie, Chris. I gess I got one of them dizzy spells. I-I gess I'm seein' double.

CURTAIN



CURTAIN MOTIF FOR "MISSISSIPPI ROVER"

PLATE XLVIII





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